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HIKER JOY

BY JAMES B. CONNOLLY

HIKER JOY

THE U-BOAT HUNTERS

RUNNING FREE

HEAD WINDS

SONNIE-BOY'S PEOPLE

WIDE COURSES

OPEN WATER

THE CRESTED SEAS

THE DEEP SEA'S TOLL

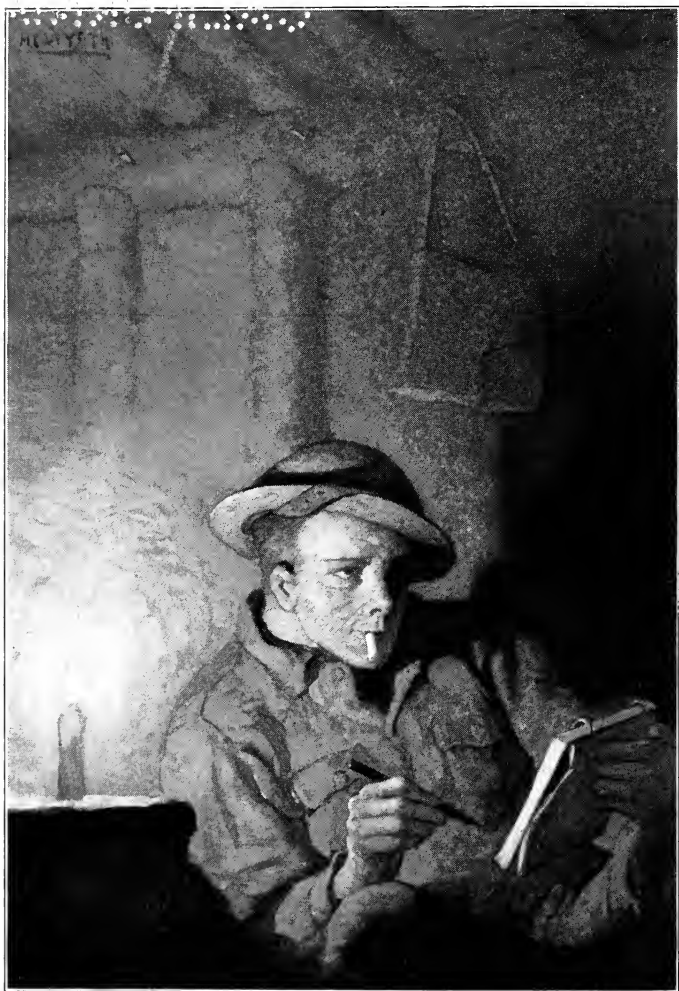
THE SEINERS

OUT OF GLOUCESTER

JEB HUTTON

THE TRAWLER

CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS



“Couldn’t he write about common people—about cops and bums and sailors and crooks and places where reg’lar people lived?”

HIKER JOY

BY
JAMES B. CONNOLLY

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY
N. C. WYETH

NEW YORK
CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS
1920

TO MY
FRIEND

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ILLUSTRATIONS

"Couldn't he write about common people—about cops
and bums and sailors and crooks and places where
reg'lar people lived?" *Frontispiece*

FACING PAGE

All this time Bill and the other guy are dodging and
side-stepping 50

"I know what you're thinking of, old General," says
Lefty. "Your dream it was to go—when it come
your time to go——" 116

The ocean just sort o' breathing in on the sand—Bill 'n'
me sit here and count the breaths like 240



HIKER JOY





How It Started

I'M walking along this place outside the naval base one day when I pick up a lot o' nice white sheets of paper between two covers, with a loop to one of the covers and in the loop a fountain pen.

Old Bill Green is with me. "There y' are, Hiker," says Bill, "with the two main ingredjents to bein' a regular author."

I ast Bill if he ever knew a nauthor, and he said: "There was one lived in a swell flat-house where I used to haul the yashes out of one time."

"What'd he look like?" I says.

"He wasn't one to expose himself to no vulgar gazes," says Bill, "and so I never seen him, but the janitor used to tell me how at nine-thirty every morning he'd take a seat in front of the fireplace in velvet slippers an' a corduroy coat an' dope out about places 'n' people he never saw, nor nobody else. And when his system couldn't hold any more dope he'd go into strict seclusion and write what his wife used to tell the janitor's wife was only the very best quality of literachoor—never nothin' less than dukes 'n' duchesses for heroes 'n' herrins."

"Couldn't he a wrote about common people,"

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I says, "—about cops 'n' bums 'n' sailors 'n' crooks 'n' places where reg'lar people lived?"

"Maybe he could," says Bill, "but he wouldn't get by near so easy."

"Bill," I says, "could a fuhla write a book who ain't a nauthor—like me?"

"Why not?" says Bill. "All kinds o' queer people 're writin' books, so why not you have a wallop at one?"

"How do I begin?" I asts.

"How do you begin anything? Spit on your hands an' go to it. Tell 'em first how we come to start in this war game. But if you're goin' to have it printed an' be a best-seller, you want'er be careful who you knock. Don't knock anybody 'less they're in bad with everybody."

"But I c'n boost people?"

"Sure, boost 'em—if they're in right."

"Generals?"

"Generals, sure. And admirals. All generals 'n' admirals are heroes, dipso facto, meaning by right o' their jobs."

"That's all right, but a fuhla's got to use hard words in a book; an' who'll spell the hard words?" I says.

"I'll fix up any wrong-spelled words—I mean o' course where they oughta be fixed up," says Bill.

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“How about the grammar part?”

“Grammar,” says Bill, “and spelling ’re good things to know, same’s army ’n’ navy regulations, but not to be stopped by when the order’s to go forward. D’ yuh know what yuh want to say?”

“Sure I do,” I says.

“Then go ahead ’n’ say it the way yuh want to say it, an’ forget the rest,” says Bill.

With grammar ’n’ spellin’ not to worry about, it looks to me like the rest of it oughta be pretty soft, so here goes!

The Jack o' Lanterns

I'M sitting in Battery Park one morning wondering what's become of Bill Green, when along comes Skinny Winkler and asks me will I run away from home.

That was easy, me having no home to run away from. So "All right," I says. "Where'll we run away to?"

"I got a nuncle-in-law in Troy," says Skinny.

"Yes," I says, "an' I got one in Brooklyn, but a lot of good he is to me!"

"Mine keeps a butcher store on the main street—a fat man."

Which sounded pretty good for the eats after we got there, so I said: "How'll we go—canal boat?"

"Canal, no!" says Skinny. "Train."

"No train for me," I says. The last train I'd been was a Nindigent Children's Association outing, an' while we're all but passing away from hunger they make us sing "In the Sweet By and By," besides behaving ourselves before they'd hand us out the glass of milk 'n' sandwich 'n' half a pickle. I know it was for my spirichal

The Jack o' Lanterns

benefit, but I was still sore on train trips an' I said so to Skinny.

Skinny didn't want to run away at all. He said it to scare me, and I never let on anybody could scare me; though they could, plenty o' people—coppers when they caught me swimming off the wrong docks, and firemen laying hose. They're the boys, the firemen. When a fireman says: "Jump, you pigeon-toed rabbit, jump before I run over yuh!"—when he does, you bet I jump.

I leave Skinny arguing about trains and walk along up-town on the Yeast River side, poking into boxes 'n' barrels and loafing into docks when the watchmen 'd let me, till I come to Brooklyn Bridge and time to eat again.

I had a nant living in Brooklyn, and sometimes it was all right to take a chance there. So I hiked over the bridge and fitted in for supper with the kids, and I'm thinking it'll maybe all right for a sleep there and breakfast in the morning, when I hear a voice on the back stairs. It's nuncle-in-law with one of his usuals talking like he hadn't finished a nargument with somebody about four floors below.

He comes in waving a nevening paper. I try to slide it from him to get the baseball dope, but he don't let go. He opens it up and shows on

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the front page a picture of a man with his forehead split and his face all powder-burnt. It's Soover, the strong-arm man for a bunch o' German bombers.

"They had him once and he got away—a daring man. A smart man," says my yuncle.

Well, maybe it was smart to blow up a place with a lot o' people who never done any harm in it, ony I didn't see it, but not liking arguments I didn't say anything.

"There's brainy men behind Soover," says my uncle—"the police'll never get 'em."

Maybe I don't like arguments, but I don't like things all one way either; so "How do you know they won't get them?" I says.

"Because they're too smart for any police."

I didn't see where that was any answer, but I ony said: "They're not all bums, the police. An' you better be layin' off that kind o' talk or they'll be gettin' you for a pro-German."

He'd been washing his face and hands, and was wiping them in the kitchen roller-towel. He hops around on me:

"You loafer, you pauper, you wharf-rat, who're you to be threatenin' an' advisin' me?"

By this time it's the roller and not the towel he has in his hands, and there's no telling—sometimes those half-drunken guys land a lucky one,

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so out the kitchen window and down the fire-escape I go.

I'm bumping along the street, wondering where I'll bunk out for the night, when I bump into the Jack o' Lanterns—a crowd o' fuhlas with a fine club room they built in Tom Hartnett's back yard outa tarred papers and laths and a few loose pieces o' scantling they picked up while a contractor they knew was putting up a government plant on the river front.

There could be only seven members in the Jack o' Lanterns, because seven is a mystic number, meaning a lucky number, and they could meet only at night, and when they met everybody had to sit in the dark till somebody who wanted to say something hollered out:

“Jack, show your light!”

And when he did, whoever was captain had to throw the flash-light on him till he got through talking, the other six listening in the dark.

Tom Hartnett had the flash-light when I come along, and being a mystic night, the eleventh o' the month and the moon coming up, they were out for a run. They ast me didn't I want to go with Tom Hartnett, and I said o' course I did.

The pack had to give us a start of one block, and then count seventeen, which is another mystic number, out loud and all together before

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they could start after us. Those things were all in the what they called the by-laws.

So the two of us go dog-trotting off, but once around the corner we broke into a good sprint. "They'll count that seventeen pretty quick, you bet," says Tom, "so what d'y' say, Hiker, if we cut through old Loring's alley and onto the other side of the block before he knows what's up?"

I said all right, and we waited at the corner of the alley to give the pack a chance. They come running around the corner, yelling "Jack, Jack, show your light!" and when they did Tom flashed the light at them.

"Hi! Hi!" they yelled when they saw it flash in the dark, and came yelping up the street toward us. We beat it up the alley.

"Up Loring's, up Loring's!" we could hear them, and "Jack, Jack, show your light!" when they came to the corner of the alley.

Tom flashed it, and went over the fence and me after him into Loring's yard. There's a dog in the yard tugging at his chain and yelping; and the pack're yelping too. It was dark in the yard, but not so dark we couldn't see old Loring poking his head out of a window and yelling, "Fire! Murder! Police!" Other windows were beginning to bounce up all around.

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"We'd better get out o' here!" says Tom, and we slipped through Loring's yard and up the other street, through Liberty Lane, past the lumber piles and down toward the river.

I took the lantern and we trotted along easy, thinking what a fine lead we had on the pack, when we see them coming a short cut through a schoolhouse yard, and climbing the fence and calling out for the light.

"Here y'are, yere's y'r light!" I says, swinging it in a circle, and then to Tom: "You go ahead—I'll get you at the next corner." And to show the pack they wasn't worrying us any, I flash the light twice more in a circle, and was going to flash it again when a voice says:

"Shut off your light and make less noise around here, kid!"

It was Beasly the copper's voice, and when I looked around I see him standing under a tree. There was another man, a young fuhla, in plain clothes, standing behind Beasly, and he said: "No harm, Beasly, in the light. Let 'em flash it." Then to me: "But a little less noise, son."

"All right," I say, and ketch up with Tom.

"How's that for a hidin' place—that old house acrost the street?" says Tom.

It's a nempty house, with the windows downstairs all boarded up and the windows up-stairs

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all closed in with blinds. There was empty land around it with trees in front.

Tom hops from one tree to the other, like an Indian on the war-path; and I double up and hop after him around the corner of the house, till we come to a cellar window with the glass all busted out of it. It's little, but Tom squeezes in, and hangs on by his fingers till I flash the light in past him to see what there is to land on. It's a dirt floor and not so deep, so Tom drops in and I drop in after him.

It's a cold, creepy-feeling place, the kind of a place a fuhla could meet ghosts in, and I say so to Tom.

"Ghosts! Puh—there's no ghosts!" says Tom.

"I know it," I says, "but I don't want to meet any just the same."

We flash the light around, and there's a furnace all rusty and a pile of ashes in front of it, and a coupla wooden barrels—busted—and a galvanized iron barrel, and a door leading to a bin for wood or coal. A reg'lar kind of a cellar it looked like, and I'm just going to swing the light away from the coal-bin when I spy the lock on the door of it.

"Have a look at that lock, Tom," I whispers—we been whispering all the time, and Tom has a look.

"A reg'lar padlock," he says.

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"Sure a reg'lar padlock," I says—"but a new one. Everything else in this cellar looks like it's been here for about seventeen years, but that lock's bran'-new. And look—it ain't locked a tall!"

"That's right," said Tom. "Let's see what's in the bin."

He pulled back the door and I flashed the light in.

On the floor nothing. I flashed the light on the sides—right and left. Then straight ahead, and when I did! Like a big black face looking out at us from out of the dark! It was on'y a hole in the wall when we come to look again, but for a second it had us scared.

Tom backs away. "Let's get out—there may be somebody in there!"

He almost had me going, too, but I stops to dope it out: "Somebody musta gone in there," I says, "'cause there's the door open behind us. But he couldn't gone in there without a light," I said. "So if he's in there we'd see his light. So, how can he be in there now? It leads somewheres. Let's have a look!"

It's a tunnel, maybe four feet high and two feet wide. We walk in, me flashing the light ahead. We keep on going and come out under a wharf, and there's a ladder running down a wall

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from where the tunnel comes out to the water. Looking out under the wharf we can see the Yeast River.

We hunch back to the cellar through the tunnel, and I flash the light around the cellar to see what else. Over in one corner is a flight of steps. "Let's go up the steps and into the house," I says.

"No," says Tom. "Let's get out. This looks like some kind of a crooks' joint to me, a place for pickpockets or somebody to be hiding things."

"Pickpockets!" I says. "A pickpocket's got to be full of coke to do anything. When he ain't, a Salvation Army lady major with a trombone could lick three of 'em running."

"But burglars?" says Tom.

I had to say yes, that burglars 're different. A burglar takes a chance, and he's got sporting blood. I knew a burglar one time, and many a quarter he slipped me before the police got him. But pickpockets!

"Ghosts maybe got me bluffed, Tom," I said, "but not any second-class crooks. Come on."

"Step easy then," says Tom.

We had rubber sneakers on, but we stepped easy, too, going up the steps to a hall. Off one end of the hall we see another flight o' steps. There's a nempty room near the steps, a small

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room I see when I flash the light around, but no chairs or table or anything. Off the hall on the other end is a bigger room, and that's empty too. We go into the big room and flash the light around.

There's a boarded-up window with a little crack of moonlight showing through. We take a peek through it, and there's the Yeast River and the moon well up over the river. We see a wharf that we think is the one the tunnel leads to, and while we're thinking that we see a motor-boat come into the slip, and the next thing we see a flash-light giving two quick winks and a long one—three times it did that coming into the slip. Then the motor-boat runs under the wharf.

"Let's get out o' here," whispers Tom.

"Get out how?" I whisper back.

"The way we got in—the cellar window."

"An' meet that guy who signalled comin' out the tunnel maybe?"

One cracked window board was loose down below. We coulda busted it out in no time, ony I think I hear somebody moving overhead, and if I do we mustn't make any noise.

We keep at the loose plank and have a coupla nails jounced out of it, and most room enough for Tom to slip through, when we hear some one coming up the stairs from the cellar. Then the

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cellar door is pushed back and a flash-light shows into the hall, and behind the light is the sound of a man and the man goes through the hall and on up-stairs walking fast.

I creep out into the hall, where I hear somebody up-stairs saying something and then chairs scraping. I wanta have a peek at what's going on up there, and I say that to Tom.

"You go if you want, but not me," says Tom. "Just as soon as I can loosen up this board to wiggle out, wiggle out it's goin' to be."

I step out to the foot of the stairs. I can hear sounds from up-stairs. I creep up on the stairs till I can hear them pretty good.

"I saw him myself—just left him," says a voice.

"And is he safe?" says another voice.

"Oh, he's safe. I have done business with him before. He's bound for Norfolk, but he will go on any Cuban port I name. He can say he was blown off his course and had to put in for repairs or water if he is questioned."

"And when we get there?"

"Your troubles will be over. No police there asking for registration cards."

"And how do we get home from there?"

"More ways than one. By one of our U-boats, if no other way."

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"U-boats! Jeezooks!" I slipped back down the stairs to Tom, who is still working on his loose plank, and tell him to hurry up and find Beasley. "Tell him to get more cops an' to hurry," I whispers. "Tell him there's a U-boat gang here! Tell him about the tunnel! Slip through the cellar winder."

"Me go down that cellar!" says Tom—"an' maybe one of 'em hiding there! In about ten seconds more I'll be slipping out through this window, watch me!"

"All right, but hurry! 'nd no noise," I says, and slips back up-stairs.

I want to see what they look like, and this time I sticks my head between the balusters. There's a little light coming from a nopen room, but I can't see them yet. There's nothing to it but snake myself along the hall; so I inch along on my hands and belly, till bimeby I c'n see into the room where the light is.

There's a shaded candle on a little table, and sitting around the table like shadows is—one, two, three, four, five men. I can't see their faces because the candle-shade is throwing all the light onto the table.

The guy that was doing the talking before is still running the show. "It may be two days before he can go to sea," I can hear him saying.

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"It's not too easy for even good ships to hold their crews in these days of war wages, and his crew deserted almost as soon as he tied up to the dock here."

"Is she a weatherly ship?" says a voice.

"She is not a *Vaterland*, Worts, but there's worse than she going to sea every day. At any rate, it's the only way for you two to get out of the country now."

There's little points of light growing bright and then dull in the dark spaces outside the table, meaning they're smoking. All but one, and that one is getting ready to. While I'm looking he reaches over, takes up the candle and stoops over it to light a cigar that is sticking outa the shadow of his face.

"Worts, you are ready to leave day after tomorrow on the *Two Friends*?" says the man's voice with the most to say.

"I'll have to, I suppose," says a voice.

"And you, Soover?"

Soover? Soover? Sure—the picture in the paper my yuncle-in-law waved at me!

The man holding the candle lifts his head. "I'm ready any minute. I'd ship in a sieve to get out of here and to somewhère where I can walk out in daylight again." He bends down toward the candle again, the light draws up the shade to the

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end of the long cigar, and when it does I see the cheeks are powder-burnt and there's a mark across his forehead like it was one time split open.

There's no argument—it's Soover.

"A fine bunch o' murderers I been buttin' into!" I thinks, and begin to slide backwards. I'm half-way down-stairs when Cr-c-k-k! comes from below.

"Tom's busted out the plank!" I thinks.

And then comes a Plak-k! meaning Tom's let the plank fall.

With the fall I hear a smash on the table upstairs and out goes the light from the room.

There's a whispering and a scraping—not loud—of chairs, and then a noise of men's feet moving around soft like. It's a cinch they're making for the stairs that I'm at the foot of. I think of getting away through the loose plank and the window, and then I says: "No, if I get stuck in it I'm gone."

I'm thinking of trying the cellar, but before I do they come rushing down the stairs and through the hall. I flatten myself against the wall, and I can feel them—one, two, three, four—slip past me and down the cellar stairs.

"No cellar for you now, Hiker!" I thinks then and wait for the fifth one. He's so long coming that I'm wondering did I count them right, when

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I hear him—not him but the noise of the stairs creaking under him. I hear the noise inching along, inching along, and next I hear breathing, and when I do—"You're near enough," I says to myself, and I step away in my sneakers, wondering to myself what he's staying behind for.

The answer when I think it out is: "It's to get whoever's in the house, and that whoever is you, Hiker Joy!"

By this time I've felt my way along to the door of the big room off the hall. I peek in and see where the low half of a busted plank is gone from the window, and through the busted plank the moon outside is making a nalley of light on the floor of the room. I wondered could I dive through the busted place, but I see it's too tight for me without time to wiggle through, and while I'd be wiggling through there was the guy who stayed behind, and a sure thing he had a nauto-matic, because all those yegg guys carry them, and they don't carry them for watch charms.

I felt him coming after me down the hall. The way the floor sags under him I know he's a big heavy guy. I move away from the door into the room, and feel my way along the wall on the side away from the window. The moonlight comes half-way but not all the way acrost the room.

I keep moving along the room. I c'n hear him coming after me. I don't have to see him, be-

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cause the floor keeps creaking under him. I come to a corner of the room. It's maybe twenty foot square, the room. About twenty miles square woulda suited me better. Near the corner I feel a door-knob and I have a hope, but the door is locked when I try it. I feel him getting nearer, and I move along the next side till I come to the next corner. I stop, and he stops, so I know he's been hearing me, too, all the time.

He's laying quiet; but I can hear him breathing and I c'n 'most see his arms reaching out for me in the dark. I don't know how long we stand there without a move, maybe ony a minute, maybe ony two minutes, maybe an hour, but long enough to make me feel that there's dead and buried people all around me.

His voice busts the quiet.

"I got yuh. You know I got yuh. Quit and step into the light. Quit and maybe I'll let you get away."

Maybe I woulda quit if it wasn't whose voice it was—the voice of the guy who showed his face when he lit his cigar in the light—the guy with the powder mark—Soover!

"Come out in the light—I know wne're yuh're standing. Step into the light or I'll shoot!"

I don't say anything, but I'm not stepping out—not with Mister Soover all set to grab me.

It's seven or eight feet to the strip o' light, and

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I got to pass it to get away. I'm thinking of the cellar. So I take two quick steps and one long high jump across the moonlight streak. And as I do the air's busted open by a pistol-shot.

I don't feel anything hitting me, so I keep right on going, guessing where the door to the hall is. Ony one shoulder bumped when I missed it a little, and across the hall and down the cellar stairs I go. I fall down the stairs, but I get up, flash the light around to make sure of the window; and when I do I feel what I know is the end of a nautomatic pressing about a ninch in front of my right ear, and there's a man's arm comes under my left shoulder and hooks around my neck and presses my head down. He's a husky, whoever he is, and he has ony to keep on pressing my head to break my neck, or he can press the pistol trigger and blow my head off—take his choice.

"That gang's come back through the tunnel and I'm gone!" is what I think.

"Not a word or a move!" says a voice in my ear.

"Do you notice me movin'?" I says, and when I do he eases off his arm around my neck, and says: "Are you the boy they call Hiker?"

"Who else could I be?" I says, and I'm feeling pretty good because it's the voice of the man who was with Beasly under the tree.

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"How many of 'em here?" he whispered.

"One, and he's aplenty. It's Soover, and he's on his way down here," I whispered back.

"Soover? Good! Give me your light."

I pass it to him.

"Now stand clear."

I get behind the old furnace, and from there I hear Soover coming down the cellar steps. At the foot of the steps he stops.

"Where are yuh?" he says, and when he does the guy who took my light flashes it right onto Soover's face, and when he does Soover jerks his head to one side and shoots, and when he does the guy who nabbed me shoots, once, twice, the two almost together, and down goes Soover.

"One would've been enough," says my fuhla, holding the light on Soover's body, and when I have a look I see why. Bing! Bing! two bull's-eyes—one over each eye.

"A tough game guy all right!" I said.

"Tough and game enough, yes, but playing the wrong side, and we had to get him."

"There was a bunch o' men went through the tunnel," I says.

"They got away in a motor-boat."

He goes up-stairs and whistles, and Beasly and some more men come busting through the window, all the Jack o' Lanterns behind them, and

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they look all through the house, but don't find anybody else.

A patrol-wagon takes Tom Hartnett and me to the station, and in the wagon with us is a lot of coppers that the last time I saw them was chasing me down alleys and over back fences, and now they're smiling and telling me I'm all right. I begin to see what a lotta difference it makes to people whether a guy's a winner or a loser in the way they treat him.

At the police station I want to have a good peek at the man who got Soover. But he yain't there. There's another guy there who came in a big blue navy auto and plain clothes, and he asts me a lot of questions. When he's through with me he turns to the lieutenant at the desk and says:

"We'll locate the ship and get them and whatever stuff they have, if we can."

He turns to me then. "Do you know Bill Green?"

"Which Bill Green?" I asts.

"Oh, a sort of a nold bum who loafes along the water-front."

"He's not so old and he's no bum," I says.

"No? Well, he doesn't believe in regular work."

"How many do," I said, "who don't have to?"

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"Where do you live?" says the navy man then.

"Nowhere special," I says.

"Let me take you there," he says, and we go out to his auto.

"The city," I says, and away we go over the bridge.

"Who's your nearest relative?" he asks me on the way. I give him my aunt's name and where she lives. He writes it down.

"Married or widow?"

"Husband 'n' six children."

"What's the husband's first name?"

"That bum? Forget him," I says.

We're half-way across the bridge and there's a fat bright moon hanging over the river. "What do you know about that full moon?" he says.

"All I know about full moons is that they rise in Brooklyn and go down in Jersey City," I says. "How about that smell o' salt air driftin' in off the Atlantic. I c'n most make a meal off it."

"You like salt water? How would you like to go a cruise with Bill Green?" he says.

"Fine business—when do we start?"

"Suppose it is dangerous?" he says.

"Suppose it is?" I says—"who's to worry if I don't?"

At the New York end of the bridge I get out and hike down to where there's a dry-goods box

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I know of with plenty of nice dry seckselsior in it,
and I turn into it feeling it's been a sorta busy
day, and maybe more busy days to come for old
Bill and me.

The Lumber Schooner

THE morning after the Jack-o'-Lantern run I'm sitting in the Battery. It's a reg'lar kind of a morning, with about a hundred hoboos sunning themselves on the benches, and about two hundred tug-boats 'n' barges whistling their heads off in the harbor, about a million people coming in and outa the ferries, and a yelevated train roaring by every minute or so overhead.

It makes a fuhla think what a nawful lot is doing in New York and what a nawful lot o' people don't have to be doing it, me being one. And I'm sitting there thankful and watching the sparrers, who're getting thick and noisy in the trees again; and watching them makes me think that soon I'll be able to take a quick swim off a dock somewhere and it warm enough maybe to let my pants dry on me.

There's a lot o' green shoots beginning to show on trees and rows o' new baby carriages being wheeled out, all signs o' sure spring. It's a sunshiny day, and everywhere a fuhla looked he could see New York kind o' sprouting out like. I'm feeling kind o' like sprouting out myself.

A nold fuhla next me on a bench is reading a morning paper somebody's left. "I see the Giants

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is striking their gait," he says—"regular mid-season form. And the Highlanders doing pretty well too—for them."

"That being the case," I says, "I guess the little old town'll be safe for me to leave for a while."

The old fuhla asts me what I think o' doing, and I tell him I'm thinking o' putting my steam-yacht in commission and take a cruise somewhere, to the West Injer Islands maybe.

"Don't you want a valley?" he hollers after me, and I say no, and drift along to where there's a navy sailor standing outside a recruiting place. I'd seen him before—a good scout—and I say, "Hello, chief!" and he says, "Hello, and what's under your hat besides a lot o' hair which needs trimming?"

"I was wondering what you had to offer in the way o' wars to-day," I tell him. And he said there was something doing in Messopotamia, and India, and the African colonies, and a fine little war going on in France and Belgum and Italy.

And I says: "What're they payin' powder monkeys?" and he says no powder monkeys any more.

"How about drummer boys?" I says, and he says there's no more drummer boys either.

Then I tells him how up in the Yastor Libr'y I

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could read any day a whole shelf full o' books about powder monkeys 'n' drummer boys in the Revolution 'n' Civil War winning battles all by themselves. "I don't think such a much of your old war," I says.

"I know," he says, "but we got to take what we c'n get in the way o' wars these days. O' course you had breakfast?"

And I says: "Oh-h, a light snack. Grapefruit, bacon 'n' eggs, toast 'n' coffee."

And he says: "Have another cup o' coffee and a plate o' beans and make it a good breakfast," and slips me a quarter.

And I says: "Thanks, chief, and some day when you're a nadmiral in the navy and I'm mayor o' New York, I'll drop down in my Sedan Ford and pick you up and take you to Del's for lunch."

"Don't forget," he says.

I have my coffee and beans for fifteen cents at a good place I patronize, and I drift along till I come to what they call a caffey in the Riverhead Hotel down the Yeast River way. From inside the swinging doors I can hear a voice—Bill Green's—trying to talk the wine clerk into a drink, but the wine clerk keeps right on polishing his glasses without answering him.

"Anything doin'?" says Bill, seeing me, and I slip him the dime I have left.

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"It will buy me one plate o' beans," says Bill, "or two cups o' coffee. But what's a plate o' beans without coffee, and what's a cup o' coffee—or even two cups—without beans?" So he calls for a ten-cent drink, and he holds it up when he gets it to the light.

"War is sure a curse! Lookit, Hiker, the size of it, not to mention the quality."

"Cut that stuff!" says the wine clerk. "We'll manage to live even if you don't buy a ten-cent drink here once in three months."

"Twice," says Bill. "I was here yesterday."

Then he pours it down and goes over in a corner to cough—it's the Longshoremen's Elixir brand, and he's still coughing when a man comes in and sits over in one of the booths. He's a tall, slim man with all white whiskers except where the tobacco stains showed.

Bill looks him over. "He reminds me," he says to the wine clerk, "of a nold fellow I see preaching a new kind of a religion off a soap box in Union Square one time. Would he be good for a dime, d'y' s'pose?"

"That old guy," says the wine clerk, "'ll give up a dime about as pleasant 'n' easy as an eye out of his head. He's skipper of a nold schooner somewhere in the harbor."

People keep coming and going, and some o'

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them knew Bill and they say hello to him, and he says hello to them, but none o' them was buying for him.

"But," says Bill, "it's a short day that don't turn up one or two with a little loose change."

Bimeby a swell-dressed guy with a plush vest and white spats, a coat with tails, and a tall boy on his bean comes in and walks up to the bar without even looking at Bill.

But Bill sees him. "Well, well," says Bill, "if it—Cecil Courtleigh, is it not?"

"That is my name," says the swell guy. "But you seem to have the advantage of me."

"And 'ardly to be wondered at," says Bill. "Owing to a severe haccident to the 'ot-water pipes up where I am in chambers, I've been compelled to forego my usual bawth and shave for the laust two days, and also it must be—let me recall—yes, it must be fully fourteen yahrs since we said farewell in Waterloo Station in dear old Lunnon."

"Not," says the well-dressed guy—"not William 'Enry Green?"

"The sime," says Bill.

"Deah, deah! But, I say, will you 'ave——"

"I will," says Bill, and orders a brandy.

"Brandy is sixty cents a throw," says the wine clerk.

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"Tell it to my old friend," says Bill, and the wine clerk tells him.

"Did I awsk the price?" says Bill's friend, and the wine clerk musta needed his job when he didn't bust 'em both with a bungstarter after the way he looked at 'em.

"Tell me, old deah, what 'ave you been doing all these yahrs?" says Bill's friend.

"For blue mud's sake—old deah!" says the wine clerk up to the ceiling.

"Sundry and several 'ave been my occupations of late," says Bill. "For yahrs and yahrs I followed the sea, and often 'ave I thought of returnin' to it. At present, 'owever, I am but a wayfarer on the 'ighways and byways. But let us speak of otha things—of the old days, Cecil."

They went over and talked in a corner, where it looked like Bill's friend was trying to argue him into something. "No, no," we heard Bill say, "I may be poor, Cecil, but I am not yet a pauper. No, no—I can always go back to the sea for a living."

"Well, if you won't, you won't, and there's an end on't, as some beastly clevah man once said. But you will lunch with me?"

"Surely, I'll lunch with you," says Bill.

"Very good. At the place I spoke of a bit back, at one o'clock—and 'ave a smoke, won't you, old top?" and slips Bill a cigar and goes out.

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"Yahrs and yahrs—of all the four-flushing bums!" said the wine clerk.

"Cease, friend, cease thy weary prattle," says Bill, "and gimme a match for this swell smoke."

"I'll give you nothing!"

"All right—don't," says Bill, and he goes over to the old skipper, who's looking at him over his paper, and hits him up for a match.

The old skipper passes over a match, and then, as Bill is lighting up, he says: "You've followed the sea?"

"Eight years deep water 'n' four years coaster-in'."

"Well, I'm master of a three-masted schooner tied up over in Brooklyn. How would you like to ship in her?"

"What cargo?" asks Bill.

"Lumber."

"What wages?"

"Let us talk it over," says the old man, and pushes over to make room for Bill.

Bill sits in and they talk it over. A couple times I see the old man looking over doubtful like at me.

"He won't eat much," I hear Bill say. "And I've a sacred trust to look after the lad. The last words of his surviving male relation, his dear kind uncle-in-law, to me before we left his home in Brooklyn was—I'll never forget 'em, captain—

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was not to let his poor little orphan nephew be cast adrift on the rough seas o' life."

"Well, it does you credit, and he can help the cook. But no wages, no wages—only his keep, mind. And don't be late at the dock."

"We'll not be late, captain. Come on, Hiker. And, barkeep, save a little o' that sixty-cent brandy till I come back, will yuh?"

"Go drown yuhself, will yuh?" said the barkeep.

"Maybe I will," says Bill, "without meanin' to."

I strolled out with Bill, who goes in to telephone somewhere, and coming out from there speaks about a bite to eat, which is talk I always like to hear. "But how about lunching with that English guy?" I says.

"Camoflooje," says Bill, and leads the way into a pretty good-looking restaurant for him and me to be going into, and there's a head waiter thinking along the same line too, I guess, for he never stops standing between us and the door all the time we're eating. But when the time comes, Bill pulls a five-dollar bill easy and careless like before the waiter when it's time to settle.

Outside the door Bill slips me another five-dollar bill, saying: "You 'n' me, Hiker, we've shipped for a cruise," and I said all right, and we

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strolled along again till Bill, who is looking up at doorways, says: "Here we are!" and leads the way to where there's a lot of offices and the swell-dressed guy with the spats is sitting at a desk in one o' them. He winks to let me know he knows me, and "Dijjer 'ook 'im?" he says to Bill.

"'Ooked 'im," says Bill, and we pass on to where there's a man looking like he had nothing to do but sit at a desk and eat caramels out of a box.

It's the man who took me over the bridge in his auto the night before, ony now h'es in a blue uniform with four gold stripes on his sleeve. He points to a coupla chairs and shoves the caramels toward me, saying: "Help yourself, son."

I help myself, and every time he'd look at me and then at the box I help myself again.

Captain is what Bill calls him, and they talk a while, me eating caramels and listening. Bimeby the captain says:

"We could get them as they go aboard, or take them off the schooner down the harbor, but we'd have tough work making out a case without the paper evidence, and that old skipper has probably already hidden any documents they're taking—in some old hole aboard his packet where we couldn't find them in a month's hunt with a

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squad of men. So you and Hiker go to sea with them and stay with them to the end."

"To the end—meaning no matter what I have to do to stick?" says Bill.

"Meaning everything. Meaning to the end, if you have to kill the last one of 'em," says the captain, and—"Good luck to you both!" and shakes hands.

"As near's I c'n make out," I says to Bill, when we're out on the street again, "he's one o' those Secret Service guys."

"Sorta," says Bill. "Navy Intelligence, they call him. And now let's find our lumber schooner."

We find her—a white, three-masted schooner named the *Two Friends*, over to a wharf in Brooklyn. We're barely aboard when a taxi rolls up, and out jumps two men. Across the dock, onto the vessel's deck, and down the cabin ladder they go—wh-s-t—like wind whistling by.

"Cast off!" calls out the skipper.

Bill and another man cast off the lines from the dock, a tug hauls us into the river and down the harbor. It was late afternoon before the tug turned us loose outside a place with a sloping hill and our flag on top of a high pole. A fort somebody says it is; and before we lose sight of it we hear a bugle calling from it and we see the

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flag come tumbling down. It was almost dark, and a soft little wind was blowing, and the bugle sounded fine. After that the sun went down in a lot o' colors behind the Jersey shore.

It grew dark, and I wanted to stay up atop of a lot o' railroad ties on deck, to feel and see what I used to read about in the books up to the Yastor Libr'y—of dark night coming down on the great ocean; but the cook, who's a big black guy, he comes and says:

“Ah say, boy, is yo'-all gwine to cut up dat squash or is yo', befo' yo'-all goes to baid?”

I cut up the squash, and it took me all next day to get over being seasick. After that I'm all right. The cook's easy on me. All I have to do is wash the dishes for the cabin people, and not too many of 'em, for the trouble with the cooking part, the cook said, wasn't to cook things—it was to get things to cook.

The second day out Bill comes around after looking the ship over. “Of all the well-wracked old packets!” says Bill. “She musta had a lucky christenin' to ever stayed afloat so long.”

I didn't know much about packets, young or old, but I know Bill's not easy worried, so I have a look at her myself. The wind was behind her at the time, and she was sliding through the green water like a sled through slush. Shish-sh-sh!

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I could hear her going, me looking down over her bow.

But everything was all right with her till the fourth day. The wind slewed around that day, and when it did the rigging pulled so hard that the planks on what they called the windward side begin to loosen up.

The next thing is she's leaking.

Next thing the wind comes stronger and her planks begin to get looser. Then the skipper put her on what they called the other tack, and when he did the planks on that side begin to loosen up, which makes the planks on both sides loosened up now, and the crew plugging away at the pumps.

Somebody got to wondering why the two passengers didn't take a turn at the pumps, and somebody else says he heard the skipper say they were making the trip for their health. Which made the first guy say: "A hell of a ship an' trip for their health!"

The water kept coming on so fast, and the crew were kicking at so much pumping, that the skipper runs her off before the wind. Sailing that way, her planking didn't come so loose, but sailing that way she begins to steer like a runaway horse. There's a good wind blowing and her bow goes first to one side and then to the other.

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I was up atop o' the piles watching her. Every couple o' minutes she'd make a dive, and when she did, what they called the flying jib-boom went out o' sight into the ocean, and when it came up it threw water back all over the piles, and I had to leave or get half drowned.

When I came jumping down, Bill is standing at the galley door. He'd just come from a turn at the wheel, and he's swapping a chew o' tobacco for a nextra cup o' coffee with the cook, and he's saying to the cook:

"She's doin' pretty well up to date, but let one o' those hoboes that pass for seagoers aboard here get hold o' that wheel—let one o' them, and let her broach every once in a while, and one o' these whiles she'll broach good!"

I turned in, and waked up by being bounced out o' my bunk and up against a bunk on the other side of what they called the foc's'le.

"Hove down," said Bill's voice in the dark near me. "The poor old lobster-pot, she's cap-sized herself."

We'd kept all our clothes on that night turning in and we don't have to stop to dress, but hustle right away for the deck, and while we're climbing up the ladder there's tons of water come pouring down. When we get on deck 'most everybody's there ahead of us. We don't see them

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all, but we c'n hear them calling on heaven 'n' hell and everybody to tell 'em what's happened. Those of them that ain't in the rigging are perched up on the high rail. Bill 'n' me, we take to her rigging.

"She's on her beam ends," says Bill—"look out yuh don't get washed overboard!"

I looked out I didn't. Everybody looked out they didn't, I guess.

Morning come, and when it did we could see she was lying on her side and a sea more white than green was rolling up to her, rolling up and licking the railroad-ties on her deck, that now stood 'most straight up and down.

Her three masts were 'most flat out on the water, each of 'em rearing up and lying down with every roll of the vessel, and every time the masts would lift, the big sail to each of them would fill up round and fat with water rolling up under it. Bimeby the water come roaring in under one of the sails and pressed it away up till it looked like a balloon, and when it did—Boom! it went like the sunset gun at the fort where the flag was the first night out. And bimeby the other two went—Boom! Boom!—the same way.

A mast cracked; and then the second; and bimeby the last one—cracked off down near the deck—and when they did the sea pulled them away

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from the vessel; but not far, because the parts of the rigging clinging to them would pull 'em back, and when they came back they came flying, and—Bam!—the broken ends of 'em come smashing up against the railroad-ties on her deck.

Next thing the ties broke loose. They'd been drifting away one or two together before this, but now away they go in bunches. Some we could see floating for miles away on the sea, but some couldn't get away. They'd drift off a little ways like the masts and then back, riding atop of the white waves, and up against the deck they'd come, sometimes one end up in the air pointing straight at us on the high rail. When they fell short o' the rail, it was a good bet they'd smash through the planking just under the rail.

The captain was straddling the rail and like most o' the rest of 'em he's getting tired of dodging the ties. "Somebody lash those ties or cut 'em loose altogether! Who'll volunteer?"

Nobody volunteered till Bill got tired of it, too. Then he looks around and asks for the loan of a knife. One of the passengers passes him a knife. "Come on, Hiker!" he says—"you c'n swim good."

A couple more join us then, and with pieces of line about us we let ourselves down into it, and

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we cut away the tangled-up ties and turn 'em loose. Not all of 'em, though.

"Our quarter boat is stove in, save enough ties for two rafts," said the skipper; and we did, lashing 'em together with pieces of loose down-hauls, halyards, and sheets. There was some loose planks on her deck, too, and the skipper said there was hammers and nails in the windward locker in the cabin. I go down and get 'em, the cabin 'most filled up with water, and Bill nails enough boards across ties to make a couple good-sized rafts, which we make fast to the high rail and climb back.

We're hardly back on the rail when the passenger who'd loaned the knife calls to Bill: "Give me back my knife!" Bill says he didn't have his knife, and he didn't. He'd give it to me when he began to nail on the planks to the raft, and I'd skewered it through my inside shirt, and I'm reaching in to pull it out and pass it back, when Bill gives me the high sign to let it stay where it is.

The man says again: "Give me my knife!" and I got a good ear for voices and I have a good look at him. His voice is the same as one I heard in the haunted house—the one answering to the name of Worts.

Worts makes so much noise over the knife

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that the skipper tells one of the crew to hand over his knife, which he does, and Worts is quiet.

The skipper then says there's some canned goods in a storeroom off the galley, and for us to butt in the door and get 'em. Bill and me bust in the door, the cook standing by to help, and I haul the stuff off a shelf which is under water. There's canned beef and cans o' pears 'n' pine-apples—the last two something special the skipper had been saving for the cabin, so the cook whispers to Bill.

The skipper passes them out, a can o' beef 'n' a can o' some kind o' fruit—pears or peaches—to each one of us; which left him and each o' the passengers three apiece. We stuffed them inside our shirts.

The seas come whiter and more higher, an' the old schooner's planks get looser 'n' looser. Her deck begins to break up and pine boards to float out from her insides. They said she had a half-million feet of 'em. I guess she had, though how much that is I don't know, for before she got through coughing 'em up it looked like a man could walk a mile on the boards that was floating away from us.

Bimeby she begins to waller; and when she does we climb aboard the two rafts and shove

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off from her. Bimeby she gives a good roll, and this time she comes keel up. And stays there.

While all this was going on the sun had come up, and gone high up, and now it was going down. It grew dark, we hanging onto our rafts. And all through the night we hung onto them. When morning came—and no sun with it—we're still there, the two rafts of us bouncing up and down on a nocean that's still more white than green.

That day the sea goes down with the sun, and that night—only for it's a little too cool for people with not too much clothes on—we make out fine. And next morning it's pretty smooth, which gives Bill a chance to look after the captain, who'd broke his leg climbing on the raft when we left the ship.

On the raft with Bill 'n' me 'n' the captain was the two passengers, but the passengers were keeping over to one side of the raft without ever a word out o' them about how the captain was making out. Bill 'n' me eased the old man's leg when we could, but we couldn't stop the raft rolling and lifting; and it was the rolling and lifting which was wearing him out, he said. He couldn't eat much, and when he did it wouldn't stay on his stomach. That musta weakened him, too, because he took to talking of his end being near; and then he begins to pray, calling on his Maker

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to forgive him that ever he had forsook in his old age the narrer path for the sake o' gain.

"The trouble with the poor old guy," whispers Bill, "is he's only half a villain, and lettin' his early piety upset him now."

The moaning and praying of the captain worries one o' the two passengers—the one I knew for Worts. The other passenger don't say anything. He's a tough guy. He eats his canned beef and drinks his fruit juice and looks around like he's waiting for whatever's coming next.

But not Worts. "If he's going to go, why doesn't he die and quit his yapping?" says Worts. "And those crazy ones on the other raft!" he adds to that.

A piece o' halyard is holding our raft and the other raft together. They're maybe a hundred feet apart, so we can easy see what they're doing on the other raft. It was chill us up at night and the sun 'most boil our brains out by day, so none of us on our raft was feeling any too lively; but they looked to be feeling it worse on the other raft. We can hear them telling of how hungry 'n' thirsty they are!

The darky cook gets up and begins to sing. And then to preach. He had a voice would fill Battery Park easy.

"De ship am at de landin'!" he bellers. "An'

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she am loaded wid angels! Who's agwine abo'd de ship wid all dem angels?" He takes a look around his raft, fixin' his eyes on one after the other of 'em. "Ah say, bredren, who's agwine abo'd de ship wid all dem angels? Is you, brudder? Is you? Is you?" pointing a finger at one after the other. Then he'd start bellerin' all over again: "De ship am at de landin' an' she am loaded down wid——"

"That dam' nigger!" says Bill—"he'll get everybody nutty. Here you—you pop-eyed, camp-meetin' shouter—quit your ballyhooing and sit down!"

The cook sat down; but he'd orter sat down sooner. Right away we saw the mate, who used to walk around deck on the schooner talking to himself—the mate jumps to his feet and calls out:

"I see my father! I hear his voice! His boat is waiting to take me ashore!" and he walks stiff-legged off the raft and overboard, and goes straight down without coming up once.

That got to Worts, on our raft. He got up, and with the sailor's knife the skipper had got for him that time, he cut the other raft away from our own. We drifted apart.

That night I had a pretty good sleep. When I woke up in the morning I notice the captain is stretched out flat.

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"He's getting a sleep in too," I says to Bill.

"Yes," says Bill, "a good long one."

"What come over him?" I ast Bill.

"He was moaning away last night, and I'm sitting with my back against his sorta holding him up, and he's moaning and moaning, and then he stops moaning and calls out: 'What time is it?'"

"'I left my wrist-watch ashore,' I says, 'but by the slant o' the Big Dipper I'd say it's about three o'clock in the morning.'"

"'Three o'clock? I shall not live to see the dawn!' he says in a low voice. And in a little while he goes on again: 'Thieves, murderers, and all manner of villains have I chosen for my consorts. The Lord put a curse on Jonah's ship, the Lord put a curse on my ship. Green!'"

"'Here, sir!' I said, and waited. But he didn't speak again. His back slid away from my back, his head bumped on the raft. That was all."

"Meanin' he's dead, Bill?"

"Dead," said Bill, "and no helping it now. Sit in and have a bite. He left two cans o' beef and two cans o' pineapple behind him. Only he was the captain and his leg broken, I'd 'a' taken some o' the yextra grub off before this. And if I had anything to fight 'em with, I'd 'a' gone over to those two passengers and battled 'em for some o' their yextra grub."

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We had a bite, and Bill says he's feeling a lot better, and from his inside pocket he hauls out a long, soft leather pocket-book. "I found it in the captain's pocket," says Bill, and opens up the pocket-book. There were some bills and receipts in one part. Bill puts them back. Next there was a little book—like what they call a diary. Bill read to himself out of it. He opens the next part, and there's paper money there—some small bills first, and then, wrapped up inside the small bills—ten hundred-dollar bills. .

"Wel-l-l!" says Bill, and slips them back into the pocket-book with the diary into his inside vest pocket.

The passengers were watching Bill all the time.

"That money," says Worts, "belongs to me."

"Holding it in trust for you, was he?" says Bill.

"Yes," says Worts, thinking Bill meant it maybe. "But you can keep the money if you give me the diary."

Bill didn't answer him, because just then we hear a yelling from the guys on the other raft. One o' them is standing up and pointing. We look where he's pointing, and there's smoke. A long way off, but it's smoke.

The two passengers look at it, and then they look over to Bill.

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"What do you say—keep the money and give me the diary?" says Worts.

"I dunno," says Bill; and has a look at the smoke, which is growing a little thicker.

"If the steamer people picks us up," says Worts, "I shall have them take the money from you."

"Maybe," says Bill, "and yet maybe they won't. I kinda think I'll hang onto the money and the diary too."

Worts has his sailor's knife in his hand. He turns to the other passenger and says something to him. The other passenger listens and nods and nods and takes the knife when Worts offers it to him and stands up and heads our way. And when he does I slip the knife I been hiding to Bill, saying: "He's a tough, hard guy, Bill, but he's got nothing on you—go to him!"

"I'll go to him," says Bill, "but you keep the other one from buttin' in."

Worts stands up and watches 'em. Soon he runs acrost the raft to get behind Bill, and when he does I stick out my foot and he trips and falls near the edge of the raft. Before he can get up I give him a shove overboard.

When he comes up I see right away he yain't much of a swimmer. He grabs at the raft like he's afraid it'll get away from him, and starts to climb up on the raft, and when he does I shove

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him back. Then he grabs my hand and overboard I go, and when I do I keep right on going and dive under and grab his leg when he starts to climb up again. He falls back again into the water.

When I come up again: "Next time I'll pull y' under and hold y' under and drown yuh!" I says to him, and he don't try to get atop o' the raft any more, but hangs onto the yedge of the raft watching me.

All this time Bill and the other guy are dodging and side-stepping, watching a chance to get in swipes o' their knives. The knives are the same kind, the kind sailors wear from their belt, with about a six-inch blade. They make a tough-looking pair all right, their faces swelled up from the salt water 'n' the sun, their lips all cracked, and their eyes away back in their heads. And about a week o' whiskers on them. The other guy looked to be in better shape than Bill, 'cause Bill had been putting away booze and taking it pretty easy before coming aboard the schooner.

But Bill was stepping around on the raft more like a man used to having the sea bob up and down under him. There were holes between the ties and planks in places, which Bill didn't make the mistake o' stepping into. The other guy steps into a hole, but not deep enough to put him down. But bimeby he goes into one good and



All this time Bill and the other guy are dodging and side-stepping.

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deep, and when he does and his arms fly up to make him keep his balance, Bill is in and on him. Into his neck for six inches goes Bill's knife.

He sags down from his knees, sticks there a second, flops over onto his face and chest without a word out of him. Bill makes sure he's dead, and then: "Another tough one gone," he says, and I climb onto the raft.

"We'll be saved a few alibis if we get rid o' these people," says Bill then, and rolls the dead guy overboard. "He went crazy and jumped overboard," says Bill—"get me?" And I said I got him.

He stepped over to Worts. "You get me too?" Worts, looking up from the edge of the raft, said yes.

"Good!" said Bill. "Now we got to dump the old skipper over. I don't like to, but I gotta. It's war times—tough days. He went crazy, too, mind," and rolls the skipper over. Out o' sight he goes too.

Bill looks at Worts, and Worts looks at Bill. "No, I yain't going to kill yuh," says Bill—"not yet. And maybe I won't kill yuh a tall. But you got a belt under your shirt, and I want it. Give up."

Bill's knife is up against Worts's neck. Worts looks toward the smoke coming toward us.

"That steamer," says Bill, "ain't near enough

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yet for 'em to see what we're doin'. Speak quick."

Worts takes off the belt and Bill buckles it under his shirt. Then he sticks his knife against Worts's neck. "No talkin', mind."

"No," says Worts.

"Good!"

"He quit easy enough," I says to Bill.

"He's the foxy kind," says Bill—"and the foxy kind never did like to die."

The steamer gets nearer. She goes to the other raft first, taking them off in a boat to the steamer. Then the boat comes for us. It gets nearer and Bill nudges me and whispers: "There's Nugent in that boat!"

"And who's Nugent?" I whispers back.

"Nugent," says Bill, "is the guy got Soover."

There's a man rowing in the bow of the boat and looking at us over his shoulder. He stands up and steps onto the raft. He steps over to Worts; then he turns and says to the man steering the boat: "I'll have to carry this man, I think." And when he says that I get his voice, and it's the voice of the leader of the gang in the hanted house.

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WHEN I get along this far with my book I pass it over to Bill and ask him how it is so far.

"Your grammar 'n' spellin' is fierce," says Bill, "but that can be cooked up. But here's something before yuh go any further. You got a nold bum here an' it looks to me like yuh're tryin' to make him out to be a sorta hero."

"Meanin' who?"

"Meanin' me. An' yuh can't do it. All model heroes 're six foot tall an' straight's a narrer, an' look at me. An' their words an' their finger nails 're both manicured. Take another peek at mine. An' no boy who smokes ciggies can be any hero. In fact I doubt, indeed it is not possible, that any true hero coulda ever even felt like smokin' or chewin' when he was a boy," says Bill.

"What d'y' spose he felt like doin'?"

"Nothin'—less it might be to utter noble sentiments to the great edification of a lot of other model boys an' old maids an' maybe bachelors. No, no, the best a nold bum like me or a little wharf rat like you can do is to make out other people to be heroes."

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"Who in this book?"

"Nobody special, because we're movin' from one place to another, and you're puttin' what happened into the shape o' stories. An' me bein' your litery adviser I got to tell yuh that the first an' last thing in a story is not to forget the story. The Yastor Libry is crowded with four 'n' five an' six-hundred page best-sellers that coulda been told in twenty pages and the tired reader not miss anything. From the Y Arabian Nights to old Homer and all the way down, the good story tellers never loafed too much once they started to tell a story, so lay off too much talky-talky an' don't try to make yuhself out too wise a guy in tellin' your story. But for a hero—what's the matter with Mr. Nugent for a hero?"

"But he's no hero—he's a nevery-day reg'lar guy."

"Well, it's the only kind o' guys we know, then I guess those're the kind o' guys you'll have to pick yer heroes from. But if you bring in Mr. Nugent don't forget the girl on the ship, 'cause girls 're part o' life too, just as much as bartenders an' cops an' lumber schooner captains."

"But what do I know o' girls?"

"What do a lot of people know who write about 'em? You can put down what you saw an' heard, can't yuh? But maybe yuh better not

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worry about any heroes. If there's any around they'll pop up in spite of yuh."

So not having to watch out for any heroes here's what I saw and heard aboard the hoss-boat, meaning the ship that picked us up off the raft.

It was a steamer with five or six hundred hosses and a lot of freight for somewhere in England, which picked us up, and about all any of us did for the next coupla days was to eat and sleep, eat and sleep, and have another drink of water every time we happened to think of it.

All but old Bill. A tough guy, Bill. Most of us were feeling kinda rocky from being so long on the raft, but not Bill. He moves around the ship bumming smokes 'n' chews from the deckhands 'n' hossmen just like there was never a thing the matter with him. Looking too good I guess he was, because the first officer comes to him our third day aboard and says:

"Green, the ship is short-handed. You seem to be rather a healthy person, and being so I shall have to arsk you to step below and stand a regular watch at coal-passing, knowing of course that you will be glad to do it in return for your keep."

Nobody notices where Bill was so glad, but he goes below and shovels coal with a gang that was

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mostly some kind o' Yeast Injuns, with not enough clothes on 'em any time to put in the wash if they ever took anything to the wash, which Bill said they didn't.

"A fine job for a white man," says Bill, "and a fat chance we'll any of us have down there if she's torpedoed!"

It's three or four days before Bill begins to show life again. In between times I'm beginning to look healthy, so they had put me to work too. Helping out in the galley and crew's messroom was my job; and I'm at that but off watch and up on the top deck with Bill one morning, when one of the deck gang named Denton sticks a corner of his head out of the wireless shack and spots Bill 'n' me, and "What in the name o' Gawd are you doing here, matey?" he says to Bill.

"O, just gazin' at the sea 'n' sky," says Bill.

Denton was the man who I thought had a voice like the leader of the tunnel gang in Brooklyn when I heard him first on the raft, but now it ain't the same voice a tall. Being wrecked and four days on the raft—it maybe made a difference in my hearing.

"I have been looking at the blooming sea and sky for most of my mortifying life," says Denton, stepping nearer to Bill, "and what there is in

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them to be gazing at I never could see. Now—there is something to look at!”

It was a nempty soap-box about half a mile away; and while we're looking there's a gun goes off from a deck below us and we see white water thrown up this side the soap-box and then a shell go hopping over it, and curving around while it's hopping till it sinks.

“He's at it, the skipper,” says Denton, “with his navy gun and his navy gun crew. Innocent enough we look until some day some undersea boat comes to the top thinking we are as innocent as we look, and then:——! A five-inch shell she will find in her insides then.”

“Well, why not?” says Bill. “The guy who said everything's fair in love 'n' war—I never notices where he's been panned for his ideas by the great 'n' virchuss public.”

“All is fair in war—I'm with you there. But hellish inventions for all that, those U-boats, or shouldn't you say so, matey?”

“Hellish? Sure they are,” says Bill. “An' so's bombs 'n' gas 'n' fifteen-inch guns too, but a funny kind of a war it will be when the yenemy runs it to suit us, hah?”

“O yes, but the inhuman U-boats, matey? Up from the bottom of the blue sea they come like terrible monsters, and send shiploads of people—

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good people quite often—to their death. Frightful, frightful, is war to-day.”

“When was it sweet ’n’ lovely?” says Bill. “I was readin’ up in the Yastor Libry one day of the roar a lot o’ guys let out of ’em one time about six or eight or maybe it was a thousand years ago because another lot o’ guys come along with a new invention called gunpowder and blows their old city walls into Harlem somewheres. ‘A ninvention o’ the evil one and should be forbidden!’ say the first guys. ‘No, no, science ’n’ progress!’ say the second bunch o’ guys.

“Another rainy day,” goes on Bill, “I was readin’ of a bunch of savages with bows ’n’ arrers who’d been havin’ it pretty soft with a lot of other savages who had ony blow-pipes ’n’ assegais. Bimeby a lot o’ white people come along with rifles an’ machine guns. And then what a yell the bow ’n’ arrer guys let outa themselves! ‘Those white folks—they got no sportin’ blood cleanin’ us up like that!’ says the bow ’n’ arrer lads.

“I used often to wonder,” goes on Bill, “if those jungle people ever drawed up resolutions again’ the use of the white folks’ rifles, and shipped ’em to the war councils of London an’ Paris an’ Berlin; and if they did, what happened the resolutions.”

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“Or Washington?” says Denton, very polite-like.

“Jeepers! Can’t yuh let a man be a patriot?” says Bill. “But yuh got to hand it to the Prussians for a few things. I was reading one day——”

“In one of their own papers was it?” says Denton. “Read their papers and a lot of truth you’ll learn about the Prussians!”

“What’s wrong with ’em anyway?” asts Bill.

“Traders and politicians!” says Denton. “Always preaching of their own high virtue, and securing most of the money and bodily comfort in the world, goes to prove, of course, that they practise all they preach. O surely! Go by them and you would think ’twas only the Prussians were fighting this war for Germany. Never a word, or if there is a word it is a scant one, and by way of showing how impartial they are, at what the others in the Empire are doing. O aye, a grand lot, the Prussians!”

“You love ’em, don’t yuh?”

“I know them, and when we know people and still do not like them what does it mean? But let us forget the Prussians. How do you like your work and your Lascar watch-mates below?”

“They’re all right,” says Bill, “ony tryin’ to start a game o’ conversation ’nd breathin’ the very

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finest quality o' Welsh coal-dust at the same time—it do give a man a nawful thirst."

Denton slips a flat pint bottle from inside his shirt to Bill.

"I thought I noticed a nabnormal development of your left lung," says Bill. "Well, here's to your Prussian friends. May they lie," says Bill—

"In the deepest blackest dungeons of the deep black sea
Where the devil fish bury their dead!

M-m-m—smooth 'n' oily that stuff, boy."

"Not bad. A drop of extra special I keep for my friends. And there's always a drop of it whenever you feel like drinking to that toast again, matey."

"I can easy see," says Bill, "where I'll have them devil fishes fed up on Prussians before ever we get to port."

"How do you dope him, Bill?" I ast when Denton moved off.

Bill reaches down and feels around his waist.

"After ev'ry time I been with him I look to see if I still got that belt—that's how I dope him," says Bill. He meant the belt he killed the guy on the raft to get. "He's lived in England and he's lived in our country, but what is he?" says Bill. "I dunno; but a smooth, tough guy, that's sure. And Mr. Nugent thinks the same."

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"A wonder you don't turn that belt over to Mr. Nugent an' have it put in the ship's safe?" I says.

"S'pose we're torpedoed and no time to get to the safe? S'pose Mr. Nugent don't trust some o' the ship's officers? An' s'pose he's got the two passengers to look after besides?"

We had two passengers aboard, one of them a young lady, Miss Rush.

"Mr. Nugent sure does keep an eye on Miss Rush," I says.

"Who wouldn't," says Bill, "at his age an' in his place? But don't never bet a nickel on what you think he's doing, Hiker. It's a lovely game, the Secret Service, and the man or woman gets hooked into it is done for anything else. But Nugent's all right. And he knows what he's doing aboard here."

It was time for me to get below and be setting the table for the deck gang's lunch. They came along, and when they did they were all talking about the target practice that morning.

"Gettin' to it is the old man," says Denton.

"Aye, he's the lad will strafe 'em proper," says another.

"And strafe 'em in a new fashion—no rammin' 'em this time," says Denton.

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"I wish he'd sink a hundred of 'em, the blarsted murderers!"

"Aye, you 'ave the right idea, mate. The baby-killers! I'd give a pound of my wages this minute to be one of that gun crew when they sight a U-boat."

And none of 'em had any more to say about the Germans than Denton, only he always called them Prussians.

That same night Bill came off watch at twelve o'clock. A tough watch he said it was, with the ship pitching 'n' rolling, and the air below like some kind o' glue, and he could feel his teeth chewin' coal-dust he said, and a long time before this cruise since Bill had been doing what they called reg'lar work. So now he comes up to his bunk in a little room that's a deck below the water-line, with no windows or places for the air to come in except a door leading into a narrer passage.

"A lovely place to recooperate in," says Bill, looking in, and he's still looking in when Denton comes along. "My room is a little better," says Denton. "How about a bit of a chat and a drop of extra special for a change?"

Bill goes up and they have a few nips, and Bill goes to his own bunk feeling refreshed. He sleeps fine, so fine that the man calling him to go on

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watch again had a tough time waking him. When Bill woke up the belt was gone from around his waist.

Next day Bill tells Mr. Nugent how he come to lose the belt. "I was beginnin' to feel myself about the wisest guy on earth, an' I oughta known—at my age—and got set for the bump that's always come to me when I'm feelin' that way."

Mr. Nugent ain't the kind to bawl a man out when it don't do any good. "Whoever took it," says Mr. Nugent, "has hid it before this, where we won't find it in a hurry. His job now will be to get it ashore. But every man in this ship will be well searched before he is allowed to land. It is Denton who has it, or—possibly—Worts, though Worts says he's with us."

"Worts," says Bill, "will be with whoever scares him the most."

That same day I'm on the top deck after lunch wondering if I'm ever going to smell land and having a peek at Miss Rush, who's listening to what the first officer's got to say to her on the bridge; and while I'm watching them I hear the lookout hail something, and see the first officer and the other officers put their glasses to their eyes. Bimeby some of the crew who come up on deck can see it without glasses—the smoke of a bunch of steamers ahead of us. Bimeby again they make

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out it's a fleet of British warships. One of them—a long low little one with a row of smokestacks—comes boiling toward us. A destroyer she is, and we fly a string of flags to her and she flies a string of flags to us and turns quick around and leaves us.

We get nearer to the bunch of warships. At battle manœuvres they were, somebody said. And it was great to see them, first going all one way at full speed, and then all going the other way. And then a bunch this way and a bunch the other way, all reg'lar as policemen parading Fifth Avenue. And the smoke is pouring out of 'em in great puffs, first from one and then from another, sometimes from three or four together. And their bows 'n' sterns are boiling the ocean all white around 'em.

All at once, from being bunched in one place, they come apart and race off every which-way. All but one ship. The others keep on going full tilt away, and we're all wondering what it means, when we see them swinging lifeboats out from the ship that's standing still.

"It's abandon ship drill," says somebody.

"Drill the devil!" says a voice—Denton's. "She's torpedoed!"

And so she is. Bimeby we can all see her stern is lower than her bow. Then we can see the

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boats jammed with men being lowered to the water and rowing away from her. Her stern goes lower and lower, and the sea comes up over it, and then there's little splashes—splashes and splashes—close in to her. Those were men jumping into the sea when there's no room for them in the boats. Her stern goes away under, her bow rises up, she twists a little and—it's all over with her.

There's hundreds of 'em drowning, and some of our crew thought the other warships oughta be picking them up and said so.

“And lose another ship or two and another thousand men or two by another torpedo or two while they're at it! It's admiralty's orders,” says Denton.

“And no tellin' how many more o' them under-sea dogs 'are 'angin' around 'ere!”

“And if theirselves don't pick 'em up, 'ow can they be expectin' us to?”

Our own ship was already steering zigzag corners at full speed away from there, and the deck gang were swinging the lifeboats out over our side. I watched them, saying to myself: “Hiker, for the rest of this trip it's no sleeping below 'n' runnin' round in dark passageways when maybe one of those little old torpedoes is gettin' ready to come aboard for you. No sir,

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it's one of those lifeboats for you to bunk in and be handy to something will float."

I'm thinking of that, and watching Denton who's rubbing tallow on the falls of one of the lifeboats after the others had done swinging them out.

Mr. Nugent comes along, saying: "Why all the extra attention?" to Denton.

"Orders from the first officer—that's all I know about it," says Denton. "'Be sure to have one that will run smooth and proper,'" he says.

"A good idea, but why not all of them?" says Mr. Nugent.

"Suppose you ask him that?" says Denton.

Mr. Nugent kinda grins to let Denton know he's put one over with his answer, and then sorta loafes over to where I am and says—he's lighting a cigarette and looking out to sea while he's saying it—"Stick by that man all you can, Hiker."

Denton keeps on tallowing the boat falls and the ship keeps zigzagging away at her best speed, with nobody saying much about U-boats that afternoon. But by supper-time all hands begin to loosen up again.

"He'll run home, the captain o' that one, and tell what a great deed he done, and Kaiser Bill he'll give 'im a niron cross or a leather medal or something an' tell 'im what a raving wonder he

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is, an' that'll fill 'im up so he'll rush out again to show what he can do again—"

"—an' run 'is bloody nose into our nets!"

"Aye, nets that was never knitted by no old wives between the cradle an' the fireplace of a winter's night. An' our bulldogs will let 'em hang there till their bleedin' corpses become rotten an' puffed out like the belly of a windsail wi' the gas. An' then what? They'll haul the 'ellish invention to the top an' let the people ashore 'ave a squint at 'er—wi' maybe a tanner or a bob nadmission for a 'orspital fund. I'd pay a bob, so 'elp me, to see the one did that dirty deed 'ooked fast to a London dock."

After supper I go up on deck to roll a cigarette. There's a notice posted saying no smoking on deck after 5 P.M.—that's so no U-boat would see any kind of light. It was a good notice when they first put it up in winter time, but a kinda foolish one now when it's coming on summer time and don't get dark till a long time, maybe nine o'clock at night. "Though at that," says Bill, "no more foolish than a lot of other ship laws that these guys ain't goin' to have upset by the risin' or settin' of any sun or the march of any centuries!" Anyway it's one of the ship's laws and the men have to pick out snooky places around deck to smoke in, and so now I tuck in

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among the life-rafts on the top deck to roll a ciggy, and I'm peeking out between a couple tiers of life-rafts so no ship's officer will fall on me before I know it, when I see Denton's head sticking up from a ladderway. He takes a long look around and when he don't see anybody he dives into the wireless shack. The wireless operator he likes his bitters pretty well too, Bill'd told me, and Denton seeing to it that he got 'em pretty reg'lar.

Denton is in the wireless shack maybe an hour when he comes out again. He steps quick away from the shack and then slows down and strolls over to the side of the ship where they can't see him from the bridge and begins to look around on the yocean. I look where I see he's looking, and when I do I bimeby see the littlest white wave. I look to Denton and he's wigwagging a white handkerchief. When he stops and I look for the white wave again, it's gone.

He walks to where there's a sorta telegraph machine on the deck. It's to ring orders down to the engine-room with when the captain is astern on deck 'stead of on the bridge. Denton looks it over, like he's thinking of sometime buying one like it, and then he hustles down a ladderway.

I go after him. He goes to his room. He's soon out and hustling with a pea-jacket on him

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to where Worts and a coupla other men who'd been saved from the wreck are bunking. He goes into their room, and in no time is out with Worts. There's only the shaded blue war-zone lights in the passageway. which you can't see anything by except you stand right under them. So I can get up pretty close if I want to, and I do.

Denton whispers something to Worts and Worts sort o' shivers, saying: "I'm cold. Wait till I put something on."

"All right," says Denton, "but hurry."

Worts goes back into his room and comes out with a big loose sweater on, and Denton hurries back with him down the passageway to where there's a ladder going to the top deck.

At the foot of this ladder Worts stops and says something, and Denton says something. Worts shakes his head, saying: "You will be caught. I will not go," so I can just hear him, and when he does Denton grabs him by the throat and starts to choke him. Worts throws up his hands meaning he's had enough. Denton, who's a quick-moving husky guy, then shoves Worts up the ladder ahead of him. I trail along behind.

They go up past the horse deck to the top deck. When I get there they're back near the stern of the ship. It's getting dark, and I crawl up to behind a gypsy head. "Stand there," I hear

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Denton say, "to shade this light from the bridge people, and I'll show you how it can be done."

Worts stood there, and the next thing I see is the flash of a nelectric hand light. "See!" says Denton.

From where I am I can see too—the big-lettered words—AHEAD—ASTERN—STOP—words like that on the telegraph machine, when Denton flashes the light on them.

While they're at that I skip over and climb into a lifeboat, and it happens to be the one Denton tallowed the falls of that afternoon, and I stick my head just over the gunnel so's to hear, but I pull it back down when I see them coming too near me.

They stop near the boat, and I begin to get a word or two. "This ship will never reach port," says Denton, "so you had better come with me anyway."

"You don't trust me?" says Worts.

"Trust you? No!" says Denton. "And no more talk! Come, or you die. Here—now! What do you say?—and say it quick!"

I'm wondering while he's talking can I slip below and get Mr. Nugent, because Denton's voice now is the voice of the leader of the gang of bomb men back in Brooklyn; but before I can dope out how to get away they're clearing the

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falls of the boat I'm in and the next thing down goes the life-boat in jerks. First by the bow and then by the stern it goes; and sometimes both ends together—little jumps of a coupla feet, shaking me up fine.

She is almost to the water before she stops. Then one of 'em comes sliding down by the stern falls, and the oars being stretched half-way across the seats in a nice flat row I'm under the oars. I peek out and see it's Worts and talking like he's sore to himself.

This life-boat is the nearest one to the propeller on the port side, and all at once I notice the propeller ain't churning up the water any more, meaning the ship's stopped steaming. Then Denton comes sliding down. I can feel him landing on his toes in the stern, but no word out of him except—"Lower your end and cast off," to Worts. The ship by then has slowed up most to nothing. There's a little jar and splash when the boat drops the last coupla feet into the water, and there's a clinking noise when they turn the tackle blocks loose and they hit the side of the ship. We drift away, and bimeby Denton says: "She's steaming again—hear her?"

"I hear," says Worts.

"And more fright than pleasure in her engine-room when they got that order to stop. And no

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joy on her bridge, I'll warrant, when she stopped," says Denton.

Worts don't say anything.

Bimeby Denton speaks again. "She'll be miles away now, the old horse-boat. I'll have a flash or two for the 212. A neat shot she made to-day of that English cruiser, wasn't it?"

Worts don't say anything.

Denton flashes the hand light out over the water. Pretty soon—"That will do, I think. There may be patrols—not ours—hereabouts," he says, and begins to talk what I thought was German; but not for long, because Worts bites out: "I've had enough of your Polish jargon. If you cannot talk real German talk English. I'll understand you better."

"Too bad," said Denton, "because you will hear no end of that jargon on the 212."

Everything went quiet then, and stayed quiet for maybe a coupla hours. Denton begins to breathe like a man asleep, but I wouldn't bet he was; but it musta sounded like he's asleep to Worts because: "Are you asleep, captain?" I hear him say bimeby, not too loud.

There's no answer, and again: "Are you asleep, captain?" says Worts.

"What is it?" says Denton's voice this time.

Worts don't answer for most a minute and

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when he does: "I thought I saw a signal light astern," is what he says, and comes stepping over the seats towards Denton's end of the boat. I could easy reach out and touch his feet when he passed by where I'm lying under the oars, but I don't. But I stick my head out behind him.'

"I see no light astern," says Denton's voice.

"Not dead astern—more to your right," says Worts.

Denton musta turned his head to look, because—Bing! Bing! comes two pistol shots from Worts. I roll back under the oars.

"So!" I hear Worts say, "I did for you, did I?"

There's no answer, but all at once I feel the boat rock and hear the two of 'em mixing it up; and then there's something not weighing much, maybe a pistol, falling into the bottom of the boat, and: "Don't—don't!" And next—"My wrist—it is broken!" I hear Worts say. But no word from Denton, only Bing!—a shot, and down onto the oars over my head come somebody's body. I coulda reached up and touched him through a narrer little space between the oars, but I don't because I feel something warm and wet dropping on my face, and when I do I wiggle away. Bimeby I find another narrer little space between the oars so I can see the stars, and lie

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there trying to dope out what I oughta do. But I couldn't see where I could do anything, and I musta gone to sleep that way, because the next thing I'm awake and trying to think where I am. I'm lying in the bottom of a boat and spot a fine blue sky up between some oars over my head. And there's a fine smell of air slipping in on me. And a great sunlight. I roll over and then I roll right back, knowing where I am right away, because the dead body of Worts is almost right aside of me in the bottom of the boat.

But he's dead and can't hurt me, so bimeby I take a peek out to see where Denton is. He's there with his head on his arms and his arms on the stern seat. There's a saggy look to him, like he's all in. He's maybe asleep, I thinks. And maybe he yain't, the foxy guy, I think again; but whatever it is, no use me hiding much longer, so I come out from under the oars and cough.

He don't say anything and he don't make a move, so I wait awhile, and then I cough and wait some more. No move.

I cough and wait some more. But not even a breath out of him. Then I say: "Good mornin'," as polite as if he's a Yeast Side cop.

That don't start him, so I step nearer and see a pistol under the seat, and another pistol alongside him. I have a nidea of grabbing one of

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'em, but I think it over and say to myself: "Lay off the pistol stuff, Hiker—he'd beat yuh to it, that guy!"

I go over and tap him on the shoulder. Still he don't wake. And then it begins to come to me, and I shake him hard.

He was dead all right.

"You were a tough game guy," I said, "but you're all through now," and roll a cigarette and I sit there smoking and wondering where the belt is. I finish my cigarette and then fish Worts's pockets, but there's nothing in them. I try Denton all over, and he's got it—wrapped around his waist. I take it off him and cut about a foot off the end and make some new holes with my knife so's I can wrap it around my own waist without having to take three or four reefs in it. It was a flat, soft, oily kind of leather stitched in two parts. Between the two parts I could feel something loose and silk-like, messages I s'pose of whatever they wanted to get to somebody somewhere. I buckled it on under my shirt.

Getting at the belt made me move Denton's head, and there's a little note-book and a sheet of paper and a pencil on the seat under his head. There's half a dozen pencil lines—not English—scrawled loose like he'd done it in the dark; and it ends in the middle of a word, like as if he

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died before he could finish. It's written on a page torn out of the note-book, which has other writing in it; but all single words by themselves when I come to look—like code words.

I'm wondering what to do then, and while I'm wondering and looking out from the boat to help me wonder, a piece of iron pipe comes sticking up through the sea. It was maybe a couple hundred feet away, and it moves like in a circle around the life-boat. The yocean is smooth, and not another thing on it but that piece of pipe moving through the water. I keep chasing it with my eyes, and around the boat it goes. And again around, but closer in this time; and I know what that pipe is from seeing periscopes in the movies, and I don't need any movies to tell me that the guy looking up through that pipe is keeping a bright eye on me. So I let the note and the note-book stay right there where they are.

The periscope comes higher out of water, and after the periscope comes a conning tower; and next a sorta deck platform with two pretty good-sized guns comes humping up out of the water. There is a letter and a number on her conning tower! U-212 it is.

A hatch opens in the platform, and one at a time come a bunch of men up through it. One in a yuniform calls out in pretty good American:

Aboard the Horse-Boat

"What ship's boat is that?" I tell him—the English ship *Bucephalus*.

"Are you alone in it?" he says then, and "All alone," I holler back, "cepting two dead men," which starts them all into life. The 212 comes nearer and the man in the uniform and another man step over the gunnel of the life-boat.

They spot Worts first, but don't say anything. Then the one in uniform looks at Denton, and raises his chin and says something that sounded like "Kapitan, Kapitan! Kapitan Chimilenski!" three or four times, like he felt bad. He picks the two pistols up, and then the note-book. He looks all through the note-book, shakes his head like he means there's nothing much in it, and passes it on to the next guy to look at. Then he picks up and reads the note; and when he does he looks at Worts and says a few words like he's sore in German to the other guy, and the other guy says something and looks down at Worts, and with the toe of his boot turns Worts over on his face.

They talk awhile, and it looks to me like I'll be in a minute taking some kind of a third degree, when a man on the U-boat sings out something and points. Everybody looks. It is smoke a long ways off. The guy in uniform looks at the smoke, then calls out something, and four of

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them rush over, pick up Denton, and carry him down into the 212. They come back and one of them points to Worts, but the captain shakes his head. He turns to me and says, "Come."

I look at the U-boat and then at the smoke. It's a fine, smooth, sunny morning and that smoke looks good. "Can't I stay here?" I say—"I'm all right here."

"Come!" he says; and I step after him and down into the U-boat, and as I do I feel of the belt and say to myself: "We got you back, but I wonder did he mention you in that note, because if he did I'm beginning to see right here where the Allies will be having to win this war without any more help from me."

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THEY showed me the way down a ladder into the middle of the U-boat, where all I can see for a while is a nawful lot o' tubes 'n' valves 'n' gauges 'n' machinery. There's some men lying down on pieces of canvas laced to pieces of pipe—some reading and some doing nothing, meaning they're off watch.

The captain and his next man came down from the deck, closing the hatch after them. The captain pressed a button or something, and when he did 'most everybody standing around takes a running long jump onto whatever his job was. Soon it's a nawful racket of the engines, and there's a gauge marking off things they call metres which 'most everybody was keeping one eye on.

Nobody all this time took any notice of me except a guy who's standing by a lot of wheels which they call valves on steamers. This guy flaps out one elbow at me, meaning for me to hop outa his way. I hopped. Him and the rest of them, they all look like they wouldn't be surprised if something sudden happens. They get me to feeling the same way. But nothing happens, and I'm feeling easier and wondering when is she going under

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water, because when she does I want to be all set to be scared. The next thing I notice them lifting the hatches and then down comes the sunlight and fresh air again.

The Captain comes over to me with Denton's note in his hand, and asks me to tell him how I come to be in that life-boat. So without making myself dizzy trying to remember too much I tell him my name, and how one day I shipped with Bill Green on a lumber schooner out of New York, and how she's blown off-shore and hove-down and how we're picked up by the hoss-boat—those of us that wasn't dead—and how on the hoss-boat I used to sleep in one of the life-boats, so's to make my getaway if we're torpedoed in the night, and how I'm tucked there under the oars the night before, when I'm waked up by the boat being lowered, and the next thing there's two men in it named Worts and Denton arguing about something, and Worts calls Denton a Polish outlander and a few more things, and Denton says a few words about Prussian dogs, and the next thing it's Bing! Bing!—two shots from Worts, and a Bing! from Denton, and next morning, when I come out from under the oars they're both dead.

All the time I'm talking I can feel somebody standing behind me, and when I'm all done the

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captain says: "He speaks the truth, you think?" and this guy behind me says: "I think so, Herr Kapitan. I also know this Green he mentions—a water-front loafer, Herr Kapitan."

"Bill Green's no loafer!" I says, and turns around, and when I do there's Emile, a night taxi man who used to come into the Riverview caffey for breakfast when I'm there mornings sweeping out the place for my eats.

"I spotted you soon's you came aboard," says Emile.

Mr. Herr Kapitan says something in German, and Emile begins to pump me about Denton, saying Denton died before he could finish a note he was writing and did I know what he was trying to write about, and I says no.

"Couldn't imagine, could yuh?" says Emile; and I says no I couldn't imagine.

Emile says something then to the Herr Kapitan, who hikes up his shoulders like he's saying: "O well, what more can we do?" And moves away.

"Who was Denton?" I ast Emile then.

"Chimilinski?" says Emile. "He was a secret service man."

"Meanin' a spy?"

"Meaning secret service," says Emile. "When they're enemies you call 'em spies. He was a secret service who'd been in England, France,

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and America. Our captain here says Chimilinski knew his business, though he reminded him of some of those Irishmen our soldiers tell about on the western front. 'Gott strafe die Englische,' our fuhlas would call out, and 'We're with you there! To hell with England!' the Irish guys 'd yell back, but pickin' our fuhlas up on the end o' their baynits while they're sayin' it. Chimilinski was the same way, cursin' the Prussians an' helpin' them ev'ry minute to win. A lot more guys the same way."

I ast Emile then when we're going to what they call submerge.

"Submerge? We been submerged. We been down to twenty metres already since you came aboard."

"Jeezooks!" I says. "And is that all there is to goin' under the sea?"

"How'd you think it'd be?—flying around and seein' scenery like in a nairoplane? But wait till they plunk a few 300-pound T.N.T. depth charges around the little old 212."

"A few? About one of those babies would be enough for me. Anything doin' in the eats?"

"Sure," says Emile, and he speaks to the Herr Kapitan, and he slips the right guy the word, and he lowers a little table from the ceiling and brings me some beef out of a can, and a cup of

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hot coffee from a nelectric stove, and some canned peaches, and soon I'm feeling better, and when Emile has to go on watch I sorta loaf around, nobody minding me much; and there's a ladder going up to a hatch, and when nobody don't say anything I slip up the ladder to the deck, where I see about all the sun there ever was shining down from about as blue a sky as ever I see, onto a nocean dimpling blue 'n' green or maybe sometimes purple, with curly little waves running up to the topsides of the U-boat to the long narrower platform which Emile says is her deck. There's a chain high as my chest running around the platform, and leaning over the rail is some of the crew, smoking 'n' talking 'n' looking out over the ocean like they think it's a pretty swell morning, too. Young fuhlas most of 'em, like Emile, and needing shaves most of 'em, too. And a wash. But I guess I was needing a wash myself. And wearing any old kind o' clothes they are, all except the Herr Kapitan, who's up atop of the conning tower in a regular yuniform.

Bimeby they spot something through their glasses from the conning tower, and soon the wake of the 212 is curving into a circle, meaning she's changing her course. Next, there's the smoke of a steamer, and looking at her I can see what a cinch a U-boat has in some ways. We can see

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her plain, but they can't see us for a long time yet—we being so low on the water.

They watch her for maybe half an hour, and then the captain says something and everybody beats it below, me with them, and when I do I find Emile standing by some valves. He's a ballast-tank man, meaning he has to blow water in and out of tanks when the 212 wants to go under or come to the top. She's going under now, though ony for what Emile says is the depth gauge with the metres marked on it and a long hand on it slipping by the 2, 4, 6, 8, and more figures—ony for that she coulda been tied up to a dock ashore for all the action I got out of her going under. There's a nawful racket of machinery again and more noise than firemen at a fire, with people trying to talk to each other, and electric lights all over the place, but I coulda got that with a night gang on a subway section.

The next thing there's a sound, a woof! from somewheres, like a big dog with a soft cold barking; and while I'm still wondering what the sound is, the 212 sorta heels over, and the captain looks up from the periscope and nods like he's pleased to a coupla guys near him.

"He got her!" says Emile, and eases away from his valves. Everybody sorta eases away from whatever they been doing.

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"What happened?" I says.

"We got a torpedo away and into a ship," says Emile.

Jeezooks! That woof! I heard was the torpedo being fired!

Pretty soon the depth gauge goes back to zero, and the captain leaves the periscope and goes up into the conning tower, and when he does half a dozen fuhlas run over and have a peek through the periscope.

"Want a look?" says Emile, and o' course I don't want to miss anything, and I see a ship low in the water. I have another look and see four or five life-boats with men in them.

"Goin' to give 'em a tow, I s'pose?" I says to Emile.

"Not while their ship is atop o' water."

"Why not?"

"She may be a mystery ship."

"What's that?" I says.

"S'pose you're in a sub an' you torpedo a ship an' she surrenders and they get into boats and you run the sub close up to her, thinkin' everybody's left the ship, and soon's you do the ship's topsides drop down and from a coupla guns hid behind the topsides comes a coupla broadsides, and to the bottom of the sea goes your sub and all hands! That's a mystery ship."

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"Ain't that fair in war?"

"Sure. But I thought you asked why don't we give 'em a tow?"

Bimeby the ship sinks and I don't see any signs of any tows going around, and so I put it to Emile again.

"It's only twenty or thirty miles to shore and the wind fair—they don't need any tow," says Emile.

"You guys 're right there, Emile—hah?—with the yalibis?" I says.

"Not a quarter as many," says Emile, "as the Yinglish after the Jutland fight."

"Didn't they win it?" I says.

"O' course they won it. That's why they've been explaining it ever since, an' why they put Jellicoe ashore after the fight."

"Meaning what?" I says.

"Meaning no nation puts a winnin' admiral ashore."

Then I come back at him with: "But that don't explain how you who's an American come to be in a U-boat."

"Don't it? Well, if it's all right for fuhlas to come over and have a wallop at Germany, why ain't it all right for other fuhlas to come over here and have a wallop at England—the United States not bein' to war at the time? Answer me

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that, will yuh? And we had 'em licked cold till the United States butted in."

"Our papers never said so."

"The papers never said a lot o' things."

He's too tough a guy for me to argue with and I lay off him, and ast him what kind of a fuhla the Herr Kapitan is.

"I see him get five ships in one day and eighteen in one week. He's a Big Leaguer," says Emile.

"Don't they all have to be Big Leaguers in U-boats?" I says.

"They oughta be, but they all ain't. We got our Honus Wagners 'n' Lajoies 'n' Cobbs, but there's Bush Leaguers too. We maybe look like a bunch o' bums at sea, but lemme tell yuh, Hiker, no bull-fighters or opera singers 'r movie stars got anything on U-boat crews for being heroes when we walk down the Strasse, of a Sunday afternoon. But there's always a lot o' guys who want to be heroes but who ain't there on the show-down; and about all that kind do is to slip out an' go through the motions, and when their three weeks is up slip back home and maybe report ships sunk they never sunk. There's phonies in the aviation game doin' the same thing—Germans and Allies both, so they tell me. But this guy—he's a 400 hitter in a Big League all right. The only trouble with him, he likes

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to sorta rub it in just to show 'em how easy it is sometimes."

"Let him try to show our fuhlas how easy it is an' they'll get him," I says.

"Oh, somebody 'll get us all if we stick to it long enough," says Emile.

It's up on deck we're talking, and just then they sight a steamer. The 212 goes after her, and hauls up on her, and tries to get to one side of her, but the steamer keeps putting her stern toward us.

The 212's gun crews come up and load the guns, and bimeby they cut loose with about a 6-inch shell. They send another, and another, and they bust in brown bunches o' smoke aboard the steamer or close by. The 212 fires maybe twenty shots when the steamer's steering gear or something else goes out o' commission and she lays still; and when she does the 212 walks right up to abeam of her and bing! bing! they plunk her like it's target practice and all day to do it in, from the 212's deck guns.

The steamer is firing at the 212 all this time, but Emile said it was a nold-time 4-inch gun she's got and her shots splash short of us, the nearest of 'em a quarter-mile away like little white bushes on the slaty sea.

"Pretty soft for you guys," I says to Emile,

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“with them not able to make their shells to reach yuh even.”

“Oh, not so soft! We might hit them a hundred times and they still be afloat, but one shell from them into us—just one and it wouldn’t have to be any six-inch shell either, and it’d be call the roll, salute and bugles, and then—Ho for the bottom for the 212. O yeah, very soft!” says Emile.

“They’re lowering their boats—they’ve given up,” says Emile next. “She’s about a 6,000-ton cotton steamer. Making a fair day’s work, even if we don’t get any more.”

But the 212 don’t get her.

The next thing we see them stop lowering boats on the steamer. Emile puts his ear up to get the gossip: It’s an American destroyer on the way.

It turned into a gray day, and the destroyer was maybe five miles away when we see her. It was a smooth sea but a swell on, and of course she was coming hooked up. It was nothing but a high white wave to her bow when she was near enough for a good look. She took a swell one time over her forec’s’le head; which didn’t stop her from sending out a shell our way as soon as she lifted out of the swell.

I could see the red-white bust of it, and next the shell comes whistling and goes skipping along

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the water—maybe a coupla hundred yards short of us.

“Thataboy!” I say.

“Rot ‘em—those American destroyers,” says Emile. “We had it soft till they came. No steamin’ in circles and shootin’ at periscopes a mile away for them. No. Hooked up and at us they come, and droppin’ the little old 300-pounders on us if we stick around.”

Jeezooks! I think, and don’t say any more thataboys!

The second shell from the destroyer is a coupla hundred yards over the 212. The third lands so handy that everybody was ordered below, and under water goes the 212. Shelling somebody and being shelled by somebody else—it ain’t the same.

To twenty metres the 212 goes under, steering every which-way fast as she could go, and she keeps on steering every which-way for maybe a hour, and then they go up for a peek. The gossip goes around pretty quick. The cotton ship is under way again and the destroyer steaming circles around her. The Herr Kapitan keeps watching for maybe three hours and then the gossip goes around that the cotton ship’s been tucked away with a big convoy, and we ain’t going to bother her anymore—the captain’s got his eye

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on a big fuhla, a 16,000-ton light English cruiser that's sticking out ahead of the convoy.

"The captain is sore at the other one gettin' away—watch him work now," says Emile.

The Herr Kapitan is standing at the periscope like he's afraid he'll miss seeing something. Pretty soon he presses a button and something like a fire alarm rings out all over the 212, and everybody that ain't already standing by something takes a running jump to get to something. They're all standing stiff to their stations when the Herr Kapitan calls out—Emile tells me the Yinglish of it later: "South—five miles!" meaning that's where the big ship is, and something else meaning the way the big ship is heading; and when he does a guy makes a point and draws a line on a chart he has on a little table near the captain. There's more things called out and more points and lines made, and another guy is standing by with a watch in his hand, and while they're doing that the 212 goes down to twenty metres. The captain stands away from the periscope and takes it easy till the guy with the watch says they got ony three minutes more to run. The same guy counts off half-minutes then till they got ony a minute to run, when he begins to count off by five seconds. Soon it's in single seconds he's counting, and then what they call the diving

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rudder man—a nimportant guy in a U-boat—he begins to porpoise the 212, meaning he's swinging her up and down under water, getting her nearer 'n' nearer the top, till the guy with the watch calls out the very last second, and when he does the diving rudder man rolls her periscope outa water.

It's maybe ony for five seconds the periscope is out o' water, but it's long enough for the captain to have a peek and call out some more things about where the big ship is, and when he does the guys with the chart and the watch get busy again; and while they're at that there's a troubled-looking fuhla called Fred bossing the job of having the torpedoes all ready.

They call out the seconds and she begins to porpoise, and at zero out of water goes her periscope again and the Herr Kapitan has another look, and it's a sure bet then he's all set to blow up the works. He whistles to the guy Fred to be ready and Fred fixes his eyes on a gadget that shows red and green lights when it flashes. And the diving rudder man stands about a ninch closer to his little wheel, meaning he's all set too. And Emile and another tank man and a fuhla standing by what they call the yautomatic safety devices, they're all set. Everybody is on their toes waiting for the word. All at once I hear the

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guy with the stop watch calling into the diving rudder man's ear, and then he yells at him, and when he yells, outa the water the diving rudder man sends her, and when she does the Herr Kapitan, who's on his toes at the periscope, presses a button or something, and——

Woof! comes from where Fred is, meaning the torpedo is on her way, and with the woof! the diving rudder man starts her down. There's a little shock like and the 212 keels over, meaning the torpedo's gone home.

The captain nods his head like he's satisfied, and then deep down the diving rudder man shoots her, and 45 metres the depth gauge says this time before he levels her up. And hooked up she goes then, her deck rolling up on one side and then the other under us, meaning she's shifting courses pretty fast.

It's like a guy turning corners ahead of a cop, and they all got their ears kinda cocked up like they're expecting to hear from the cop, and they hear. There's a boom!—dull, like it's from the other side of a wall, and the 212 shakes and keels over a little. Another boom! louder—and she shakes and keels over more. Another one the same. By this time everybody is sticking up an ear and sorta drawing their shoulders together, like they're expecting a good one. Me too.

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And it comes. Bam!—quick, like it's just over the roof. Cr-r-r-er! goes the 212 shivering and shaking, with four or five guys knocked down onto the deck, and a coupla more who're off watch and lying down in their bunks come tumbling onto the floor.

There's another one comes, Ba-am! and when it does—"Here we go!" I say, meaning it's the finisher. The lights go out with it, and all over the place I can hear men banging around and saying things. And then I hear the Herr Kapitan's voice, and soon a coupla guys come with a flashlight and they look at a few things, and bimeby the lights come on. There's a coupla more bombs while they're tending to the lights, but nothing real bad.

Nobody says much for a while; and another while before there's any easing-away by the men standing by their gadgets. Bimeby, a long while after, the Herr Kapitan sends her up to where he can have a peek through the periscope; and when he does, looking all around he says something like he's pleased, and pretty soon she goes to the top and the hatches are lifted and the cool fresh air comes floating down, and it smelled good.

It's dark then—I can see the stars through the hatches; and they rig up the wireless, and pretty soon they're grabbing off messages about the big

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ship and pasting them in a glass frame after the officers read 'em. One of them the Herr Kapitan reads out loud. The big ship is gone down and the American destroyers are picking people out of the boats. Then everybody begins to feel better, and somebody sets going a phonograph they got.

They have supper, and when they do a radio man comes off watch with more news of the big ship. The torpedo man Fred, who never used to take much notice of anything except his job, is sitting near the wireless man eating, and he turns around and asks the wireless man something in German, and the wireless man answers him. And when he does, Fred goes over and begins to read the messages in the glass frame. There's names of people killed on the big ship among them.

He comes back without saying anything, but he sorta plays with his grub for the rest of the meal. Bimeby he's sitting on the edge of his bunk, not saying anything to anybody but looking like he's doing a lot o' thinking, and Emile gets talking to him, me near them. All at once "Wow!" I hear Emile say—"but that's tough!" in English.

Fred begins to talk English to Emile then, saying how he'd lived as much in England as in

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Germany before the war, and what could be more pleasant than the way they were getting on? No two countries in the world were more friendly to each other, so many interests in common. And now this terrible war!

"And to think it was my hand, Emile, which fired that torpedo!" he says bimeby.

"Why how can you be blamed for that?" says Emile. "You might as well be blamin' somebody ashore. We're all ony doin' what you got to do."

Fred don't say any more. He rolls into his cot, and soon it's all over the ship that Fred's two sisters were married to Englishmen and one of them is the chief engineer of the big ship, and both of 'em on the list of killed that the radio man grabbed off by wireless.

"Fred ought never been in this game," says Emile. "His mind runs too much one way, and he never did carry enough ballast tanks for emergencies."

In the morning Fred ain't there at his torpedo station. I ask Emile where is he?

"Fred's dead!" says Emile, and the way he says it I don't ast him what he died of.

Bimeby the captain goes and looks at where Fred is in his bunk, and he says something and a coupla guys wrap a blanket around him and put

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him next to Denton, who's been lying in a top bunk since the morning I come aboard.

For the next few days nothing special happens, except the crew keep looking up at the two dead men and talking about them, and bimeby one of them goes up and asks the captain is he going to keep them there. And Emile tells me he says: "Why o' course, and bring 'em back to Germany at the end o' the cruise."

"But two weeks more—the men 'll never stand 'em that long," says Emile.

That same day they run her in shoal water, to put her on bottom and look over her machinery, which ain't been working right since the bombing.

The first thing when she gets there is, for all who don't have to work on the machinery to take a loaf. Some go to sleep, and some get busy with the phonograph. Others play a game that ain't poker or forty-fives or high-low jack—some German game with what they called fennies for stakes. If a guy was in hard luck he maybe lost thirty or forty fennies, which is about a nickel, in a hour. And maybe a good thing it was that way, for having to lose your money and be in a U-boat the same time—being outa luck I'd call it.

There's something besides machinery the matter with the U-boat and everybody soon knew it

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next day. They found they'd put her on the edge of a cliff like to lay in under water, and if a storm come and rolled her the wrong way, it'd be all over with them. The engineer and the kapitan have a session, and the kapitan orders a lot of men to their stations to start her up. She lifts fine at the bow end, but the stern end lies right down and stays down. They try it again and she don't budge, though the bow goes so high and the deck slopes so much, everybody who ain't hanging onto something takes a slide, and down from the top bunk the two corpses land onto the floor.

Somebody says then that the corpses are bad luck and they oughta dump 'em oberboard, and the Herr Kapitan, who's a neasy kind of a guy, he says all right, to wrap 'em up, and at dark he'd shoot 'em through the torpedo tubes and out the way.

That's in the morning. The place being lit up like a subway car all the time, the only way I know it's morning and not night is by the meals. It's after breakfast, and I get to thinking about where I get off if anything happens the 212. So I go up to Emile saying:

"Emile, it's all fine for you an' the gang aboard here to sink ships; and if a ship sinks you, then fine for her. Whatever happens, it's fine for some-

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body but me. Suppose anything happens and I go to the bottom?"

"S'pose you do, don't everybody go too?"

"Sure, but you picked this job. I didn't. And there's somethin' comin' to you if you do go. Back in Germany there'll be people saying great things about you, but there'll be nobody hanging any crape on any door knobs for me if I go—even if they know when I go, which they never will if I go down with this boat."

"What you drivin' at?" asts Emile.

"I been looking at the dead guys," I says. "If you can shoot a dead guy out of a torpedo tube, why can't you shoot a live one?"

"We can."

"Then shoot me out while we're so handy to the shore, and let me get away."

Emile studies it out, and then he looks at the depth gauge, and says: "We're fifteen metres down, about fifty foot deep—too deep. The change in pressure 'd kill yuh before yuh got to the top."

"How much is eleven metres?"

"About thirty-six feet."

"This morning the depth gauge said eleven metres—I been watching it—meaning low tide o' course, and it'll be low tide again to-night, and if I c'n dive 'n' pick up mud in thirty foot o'

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water off a Yeast River dock just to show a bunch o' loafers I c'd do it, I guess I c'n stand a few foot more if it'll take me out of a U-boat."

Emile's always been pretty friendly to me, and now he takes me to the captain, and I talk to him. He listens, and then he asts me would I risk being blown from a torpedo tube.

"Slam me into one and see," I says.

He asts me then how long I ever held my breath under water.

"I dunno. As long as I had to up to now," I says.

He eyes me. "I will consider it," he says.

After supper, which is low tide, they take the two corpses and hook weights onto 'em—that's so they won't go drifting all over the ocean when they shoot them out. While they're doing that the captain is talking to Emile, who bimeby comes over and says:

"I just told the Herr Kapitan, Hiker, that I know yuh, and he c'n lay down his last white chip that if you make it safe, you'll keep your mouth shut about where you come from. That's right, ain't it?"

"Emile," I says, "I never yet opened my mouth to hurt anybody who'd been half-way good to me, and I prob'ly won't now. Is that good enough?"

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Emile looks at the Herr Kapitan, who is listening, and then back to me: "He says to get ready, Hiker."

I kick off my sneakers and get outa my jacket.

"Better take off everything," says Emile.

"I'll maybe need my shirt and pants when I hit the beach to keep warm," I says; but what I was thinking was: "If I take off any more, they'll see the belt around my waist."

There's two men saying prayers over the two corpses. I ast Emile does he s'pose they'd say a few for me.

"I'll ask them," says Emile.

"And when do the dead guys go?"

"Right after you."

"Jeezooks! gimme a little start will yuh? A corpse is no fine thing to have come whistling by my ear, Emile," I says.

I shake hands all around. "Wee gates, Herr Kapitan!" I say when I come to him. "You treated me all right—meaning more than my free board 'n' lodging by that."

"Mein knabber!" he says, and then "Auf wiedersehn!" and pats me on the head.

The torpedo guy who took Fred's place starts to open up one of the torpedo tubes low down, but Emile tells him to give me a top tube. "It's

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a coupla feet nearer the air," says Emile, "and every foot 'll maybe count."

So the guy opens a top tube and I climb into it.

"I hope you make it," says Emile, "though I'd rather take my chances here myself."

"Then we're both suited," I say.

Going into the tube is like crawling through a section of sewer pipe. I reach the other end. "All right!" I holler back.

"Got yuh!" hollers Emile. "When I begin to count, you begin to take in your breath. When I say three, we slam this end shut, open up your end, and out you go. Ready?"

"All set, and so long!"

"One!" says Emile. "Tw-o! Thr-e-e-ee—and good luck!"

Wang! the breech slams behind me. I take in air and wait. I can hear the valves opening, and br-rr-rr—and wo-oo-sh-sh—it comes, the whole ocean flowing in on top of me. Back it starts to sweep me, and then— Zwizz! comes the pressed air or whatever it is and out the tube I go about forty miles an hour.

A guy shooting up Niagara Falls 'd feel the way I did, I guess, and there's enough air inside me to blow out a young balloon. Bimeby the ocean stops rushing by my ears, and when it does I begin to kick and throw up my head, and to

The Undersea Men

kick and to crawl with my arms and legs all I know how. I dunno how long I was under, but longer than I'll pick out again, if I have the picking; and when I come to the top, if anybody'd been there to see, they'd seen me shooting about five feet into the air.

But there was nobody there to see.

It was a moonshiny night, and when I get my breath going right again and make sure my ears are still tied to my head, I look around. There's a low shore maybe a coupla miles away. Well, that's all right, and I head for it, swimming easy. Every few minutes I'd raise my head to see was it still there. One time after I'd been swimming maybe half an hour I look again if it's still there, and I see it is, but I see something, too, like a bird playing tag with itself in the moonshine. It drops and it flops, and drops again. I know then it's a flying machine in some kinda trouble.

It lands on the water, and when it does I head for it, taking maybe half an hour to make it. I don't know whether it's an ally or a German and I don't care—I'm feeling lonesome.

It's one of those navy airplanes, I see, with a boat shaped like a fish in the middle of it when I swim up to it. I grab hold of the boat part, and there's a fuhla tinkering on something. I'd like to waited till he got through, but I'm

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beginning to feel cold. And tired. So "Hi there!" I holler; and when I do, around he comes spinning with what I can see is a good-sized wrench. He leans over like he's going to soak me one and when he does I duck under water.

I come up a coupla yards away, and when I do: "For th' Lord's sake! Who are you and where did you come from?" he says.

"The Crown Prince o' Germany—who else?" I says. "But will yuh lay off that yeggman stuff and give a lift to a fuhla who's just swam about half-way acrost the Yatlantic?"

"What—ony a boy!" he says, and helps me up.

He gives me time to stand up, and then he says: "How you feeling now?"

"I think my feet are a little wet," I say.

"Excuse me," he says, and grabs a kinda Teddy Bear suit and slides me into it and shoves me into a little round hole in the boat. And I curl up there, and making sure I still got the belt, I say to myself: "Pretty soft for you, Hiker!" And having nothing else to do, I flop off to sleep.

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I ASK Bill to look over what I've wrote up to where I get outa the U-boat, and he does; and when he's read it he draws up his chair and says:

"Whoever's tellin' a story is like the captain of a company who oughta know where everybody is when he's marching 'em along. He mustn't leave any stragglers along the road. What youghta do now is tell what brought Mr. Nugent to the horse-boat an' what happened him an' the rest of us, before everybody forgets all about us."

"But how?" I says. "It's easy enough tellin' about things happenin' when I'm right there to see 'em happen, but how do I tell about things happenin' when I yain't there?"

"I knew a fuhla once," says Bill, "I yused to meet him along the Yeast River, and he looked 'nd acted like 'most anybody else, sittin' in 'nd havin' a beer like he liked it, an' not mindin' much where he got it so it was all right, and not kickin' when it wasn't if the barkeep or the waiter was all right."

"This fuhla writes stories. I read a lot of 'em in magazines 'n' books in the Yastor Libry, and

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some of 'em wasn't bad a tall. An' he didn't care who he wrote about—barbers 'n' barkeeps, cops 'n' longshoremen suited him as good as anybody else. I ast him one day why he didn't stick in a duchess or a few kings once in a while to his stories?

“‘Maybe I would if I knew a few. Do you know any?’ he says.

“‘They ain't been many of 'em rollin' up to my door lately,’ I says. ‘But do yuh mean yuh have to know something about the kind o' people you write about?’ I says.

“‘It makes it less painful for some of your readers,’ he says.

“‘Well, I was readin' a novel the other day about the kind o' people I know somethin' about, and that didn't hold, and it was a best seller,’ I says.

“‘Proving again that people like to be kidded along. But I thought we were speaking of stories, not novels.’

“‘What's the difference?’ I says.

“‘Generally a few hundred pages. A novel is mostly talky talky, and a story mostly doing, isn't it?’

“‘But how does a man go about writing a story?’ I ask him.

“‘I don't know's he goes about it at all,’ he

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says. 'Aren't stories all the time bouncing up in front of you?'

"And he tells me a lot more about writing stories. An' he bein' the ony author ever I met face to face I listen. And here's my dope about it, Hiker, after he gets through: Suppose something happens to you?"

"Happens where?" I says.

"Anywhere. In your mind if no place else."

"How could anything happen in my mind?" I says.

"Why couldn't it, as well as in a back yard or a palace or a bar-room? Why couldn't one of those what they call ideas strike your mind and make you take notice same as a guy wallopin' you in the back of the head with half a brick?"

"I dunno why not, but I think I'd take more notice of the brick," I says.

"Maybe I would too. But listen to me and get this dope about tellin' a story. Something happens to me, say, and tellin' you about it maybe I add on a little. And you tellin' somebody else, maybe you add on a little. So I add a little and you add a little, and between the two of us we'll maybe get a story."

"Yeah, but where'll I be addin' it from?" I says.

"From yimagination, where else?"

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"But I got no magination to be addin' to anything," I says.

) "Nor me either," says Bill. "But anyway here's a wallop at what you left out of what happened on the hoss-boat, an' I'll tell it the way it happened."

"Oughtn't yuh write it yuhself?" I says.

"I coupla times thought o' that," says Bill. "I dunno but I will, an' maybe I c'n put more class into my writin' than you been gettin' into my talk."

So whoever don't like the next story can tell it to Bill, not me.

The morning after Mr. Nugent killed Soover (this is Bill writing now), that navy intelligence captain in New York calls Mr. Nugent and me into his office. He gives me a few instructions and then asks Nugent how he feels about tackling another little secret service job.

Nugent don't feel like it at all. He's a navy lieutenant and wants to get across, and onto his reg'lar job, which is on a destroyer chasing U-boats, and he reminds the chief of that, and how the chief had promised to help him along after he'd drove that gang of bomb men out of Brooklyn.

Now of course the chief could have ordered Nugent to do whatever he wanted him to do;

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but the chief is no rough file—not when he wants to smooth a guy down. He's looking at a newspaper with a picture in it of a steamer. "Here's the ship," says the chief, "which ran down that U-boat—remember her?—that one which made believe to surrender last month and then upsteam and rammed and sunk the sub?"

"I remember her," says Nugent. "But all's fair in war, isn't it?"

"If you can get away with it," says the chief, looking at his wrist watch; and not saying any more till a clerk comes in to tell him that Mr. Rush and his secretary are outside.

"Show them in when I ring," says the chief.

"This Mr. Rush," says the chief to us when the clerk goes out, "is the inventor of that new bullet which can penetrate and set fire to airplane tanks."

"That so? A great thing if he's got it," says Nugent.

"He's got it. We're making them now. And the Allies are to make them, which means that Mr. Rush and his secretary are leaving soon for over there to show them how to make them."

"I know now," says Nugent—"he's the man was to sail on that passenger liner next Monday."

"Was but isn't. That liner won't be able to sail for another two weeks, so he is going over on

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this ship I just showed you, the *Bucephalus*. But I've a fear, which is growing larger in me, that she's a marked ship, that some U-boat will get her, which means they may get him too—and his secretary."

"Well, it's all part of the war game—the risk—isn't it, sir?" says Nugent.

"Sure," says the chief. "But think of a lovely young girl taking a chance like that."

"What lovely young girl?" says Nugent.

"His niece, Miss Rush, is his secretary. But will you both step into the other room now?"

We step into the other room, and Mr. Rush and his niece come in. And the door between the rooms being open, we can't help seeing Mr. Rush and his niece, meaning the chief wants Mr. Nugent to see them, I guess. When they leave, Nugent goes bouncing in to the chief saying: "It's not right, sir, to let a young girl like that take that risk."

"I'm thinking the same thing," says the chief. "No harm if some capable party was at hand when needed. Bill could do it perhaps, but I'd rather Bill went on the lumber schooner job. Do you want to cross on that ship?"

Of course Nugent wants to, and so it came to pass that about the time we're shoving off in the old lumber schooner, Nugent is in Norfolk with

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papers to show he's an English citizen and inquiring how he can get a passage to England.

Somebody points out the *Bucephalus*, and he's sitting on a box on her wharf that he knows holds shells though they're not so marked, wondering how he'll get aboard her without calling too much attention to himself, when one of the ship's officers steps up to him and says:

"My man, how would a ten-pound note look to you for your next month's time on that ship there—the work not too hard, and the sight o' foreign lands to pleasure your eyes after a nice twelve days at sea?"

A ten-pound note or no-pound note would've suited Nugent; but to go through with it right he says a fifteen-pound note would look better. They split on eleven, and the officer takes him aboard and introduces him to a can of gray paint and a wide brush, and tells him to get busy. And they put out for sea, with Nugent painting the bridge within ten feet of where Miss Rush is talking to the first officer, one of the guys that Nugent is to keep a special eye on.

By and by when the lumber schooner's wrecked, which isn't part of the plan at all, and we're picked off the raft by the ship Nugent's on, he don't let on to notice Hiker or me but he slips me

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the word early to keep a special eye out for a horseman, called Clews.

"That guy? Why he's shoutin' all the time for the Allies down between the decks!"

"That's all right," says Nugent when I report. "Some of the best little spies of both sides are shouting from the housetops for the other side. Keep your eye on him just the same."

To keep an eye on Clews I loaf a lot among the horsemen, 'specially with one of them named Lefty Hall, who's an old-time cavalry bugler. Lefty liked to lie in among the hay below the horse deck smoking cigarettes where he thinks the officers won't see him, and blowing army calls on an old brassy cornet he carried around his neck on a string. Clews don't like Lefty much, and one day when Lefty falls to sleep smoking and starts a fire among the hay, Clews tips off the first officer, who comes along and begin to sniffs.

"Do I smell something?" says the first officer. Smell? He could 've carried a button for a nose and half the ship's length away smelled the half bale of hay that was scorched before we'd got the fire put out.

"I do smell something," he says, pointing his beak for'ard and then aft. "I'm quite certain I do, and it is smoke," he says, and dives and grabs old Lefty, who's rheumatic and slow on his feet,

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and puts him in the brig which is two decks still lower down, and which only the ship's carpenter has the keys of. And going into the brig, Lefty hollers to me not to forget to have a look out for his pet horse, a bay he'd named General because he looked like Lefty's troop horse in the old Seventh Cavalry.

Then comes the night when Hiker and Worts and the man called Denton disappear with a lifeboat in the night.

"Poor Hiker," says Nugent. "I'm afraid he's gone!" And I'm thinking the same.

Bimeby we're in sight o' land and we're all saying how fine it will be to be ashore. But there's no being ashore soon. Some kind of a warning comes by wireless and away the ship goes off-shore again.

That same afternoon I'm on the top deck looking out over the ocean, which is oily smooth and quiet as if old Neptune is asleep, but a long heavy swell under the oily smooth blackness shows the old fellow's breathing in his sleep. By and by I could 'most hear him snoring; that was when the swell would roll up to the sides of the ship and lift her up and let her down again.

It comes sunset time, only there's no sun—nothing but round, fat clouds above the horizon in the west. It don't look good to me. Up on

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the bridge is Miss Rush and her uncle walking with the first officer, and that don't look too good to me either; but I spot Nugent tucked away behind a winch making believe to be busy when anybody comes by, but watching the people on the bridge, which makes me feel better.

Coming across the ocean we'd been having life-boat drill, meaning that two or three times a day they'd blow a whistle, and when they did we'd all grab our life-belts and run up to the boat deck and stand by life-boats and rafts till they blew another whistle, and when they did we took off our life-belts and went back below.

A few days of that and we get so good we can make the boat deck without knocking each other off the ladders going up, and so we don't hurry doing it any more, and if any of us down among the hay happen to be playing a little game when the U-boat signal blows we play the hand out; because leaving your money, and a gang of horse-boat men, to hurry on deck—well, it ain't giving your money much of a show.

We're through supper but there's still plenty of light, and we're having a game of red dog this evening below, when without any U-boat whistles, or anything else blowing, we feel the deck rising up under us and throwing us all over the hay. Everybody beats it for the boat deck, me sprint-

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ing with the best of them, when I see the ship's carpenter, which makes me remember Lefty Hall is in the brig. I asks the carpenter did he let Lefty out, and he says—"Bly-me, I never thought of 'im!" So he slips me the brig key off his bunch and I rush down and let Lefty out.

"We been torpedoed or mined or somethin'," I says.

"You don't have to tell me—I been torpedoed before, and it's good-bye the horse-boat!" says Lefty, and beats me about ten yards to the nearest ladder with his old cornet hanging round his neck by a string. We're going up ladders like a couple of firemen, when we hear the horses whinnying and kicking in their stalls. Lefty stops.

"How about the hosses? Oughtn't they have a chance, Bill?" he says.

I'm strong for keeping moving, but it is kind of tough on the horses, so I go back below with Lefty and turn them loose from their stalls.

There's a loading port on the horse deck, and by the time we get them free the sea is 'most up to there; and we throw the port open, and the first of the horses rush up to it and stick their heads out and sniff and draw back, till Lefty says:

"We gotta do it, Bill. They mustn't be let

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drown like there's nobody cares for 'em," and hits the first one on the rump and he dives overboard, and the others dive after him, and we can hear 'em splashing one after the other into the ocean while we're running up to the boat deck.

When we get up there all the boats are gone and rowing away from the side of the ship—and all the officers and crew gone with them, all but Mr. Nugent who comes rushing up to me saying:

"I've been waiting for you. Listen and get this: The first officer put Mr. Rush in a life-boat with Clews. Find that boat and get in with them. Your job is to bring Mr. Rush safe ashore. Got anything—pistol or knife?"

"I got a knife," I says.

"Use it if you have to. Clews is your man, remember, and he's probably got a pistol. Good luck to you. I've got to see that nothing happens Miss Rush through that first officer"; and away he goes sliding down a boat-falls.

"Ketch holt, Lefty!" I says, and we shove over a raft, which is easy enough, the deck being so slanting; and we jump over and climb up on the raft.

By then the sea all around is crowded with swimming horses, most of 'em trying to catch up with the boats rowing away from the ship. There's one horse leaves the others and heads for



“I know what you’re thinking of, old General,” says Lefty. “Your dream it was to go—when it come your time to go——”

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our raft, and when he gets near: "Look at old Gen'ral!" says Lefty. "Ain't he the wise one?"

Lefty takes hold of General's head rope and General he whinnies like he's lonesome, and Lefty sits on the edge of the raft and talks to him.

"I know what you're thinkin' of, old General," says Lefty. "Your dream it was to go—when it come your time to go—aridin' into battle to a bugle call, with some trooper you liked and that liked you on your back. But it ain't to be, old General," says Lefty, and General snuggles his nose right up to Lefty's like he knows it ain't to be.

It's getting dark. We can hardly see the other horses or maybe the heads of 'em rearing up out the water; but when we can't see we can hear them plain—splashing and whinnying and snorting from out of the dark. Soon come gurgling sounds, meaning they're drowning, and old Lefty keeping count of 'em and saying: "Seven. Another one—eight. One more—nine. Ain't it a hell of a death for a good hoss, Bill?"

Old General is all the time getting heavy on his head-rope, with Lefty talking to him and lifting his head to help him. I slip the head-rope through a ring on the raft so's to make it more easy all round, which it did a little, till General gets so tired he falls away from the raft, with his head dragging under and he choking and splutter-

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ing and rearing up his head and trying to close in on the raft again.

"It's only agonizin' him," says Lefty. "Turn him loose and let him go down a free hoss," and he lays down on the raft and pets him and kisses his muzzle, and by and by: "Good-bye, old Gen'ral!" he says and lets the head rope slip away.

And so his bay pet went. And on the sea all around were other good horses going too.

Lefty is sitting there, not feeling much like talking, but I touch his arm and say:

"Lefty, I ain't ever seen so many hosses, but I've seen a lot o' humans pass out. In the navy the band plays dead marches goin' to a funeral but it's always a quickstep comin' back, which is good dope too. What's the good o' stretchin' out the gloom when it won't do any good? Why not tear off a little somethin' cheerful on your cornet?"

"I don't feel like anythin' cheerful now," says Lefty.

"All right. They play somethin' mournful 'n' fittin' to your feelin's."

So he fixes his old cornet to his lips, and he begins—low like at first, and then swelling out more. It's Taps he's sounding, and when Taps is sounded right—low first, and then full and more

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full, and low and sweet again—it's like a prayer over a grave, I say.

But from out of the night when it's done comes a voice: "You silly old hobo, and your damn cemetery air! Shut up, will you?"

And Lefty, who is all set for another tune, he lays down his cornet, and he sighs and says:

"Bill, it's been all my life that way. I might a been a musician to-day, earnin'a good livin' in a theatre orchestra, or a military band somewhere, 'stead of a nold bum on a North Atlantic hoss-boat, but it's been knock, knock, all the time—always knocking from guys who could just as easy been boostin' me."

And I reaches over to him and says: "Lefty, I'm not setting up to be any judge o' music, but what you just played sounded like it was a master playin' to me. And as for that grave-robber!" raising my voice so what I was sayin' won't be wasted: "Whoever it was hollered out to you that time can go to school to you for a good heart 'n' good manners."

I knowed who it was yelled at Lefty—it was Clews. I could see the shadow of the boat his voice come from drifting nearer to us in the dark. I tell Lefty I got a little matter of business to settle with Mr. Clews, and does he want to come with me? But he's not strong for swimming

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around the ocean looking for a boat he can hardly see in the night. Besides, in his last torpedoed ship he'd seen two boats capsize. Rafts wasn't maybe so comfortable but they didn't capsize.

I make sure my knife is tucked tight in my belt and then slip off the raft and overboard. I keep lifting my head out of the water every once in a while to make sure I'm not losing the boat.

When I get alongside the boat, there's a head and shoulders sticking over the gunnel astern. There's another head sticking up above the gunnel near the bow. I size up the shapes of 'em. It's Mr. Rush near the bow, and I climb in that end, trying not to make any noise.

But Clews hears me. "Who's that?" he calls out.

"Me—Bill Green."

"Where'd you come from?"

"From a raft."

"Why didn't you stay on your raft?"

"I didn't feel like it."

Then Mr. Rush who's half asleep says: "What's the trouble?"

Clews don't answer; nor me, except to ask Mr. Rush if he has a handkerchief, telling him I got a nose bleed. He passes me one, and I sit two seats away from him, making believe to be drying my nose but drying my hands and the handle and blade of my knife instead.

Good-bye the Horse-Boat

It was a night without stars—dark. By and by the wind begins to make and the boat to pitch, and soon comes thunder and lightning. I can hear Mr. Rush saying things to himself; and I ask him is anything wrong, and he says he's worrying about his niece.

"It's foolish worryin' about your niece," I says. "Mr. Nugent 'll look out for her."

"Who is Mr. Nugent?" he asks.

"One o' the crew and a fightin' American," I says.

"Nugent? What you saying about Nugent?" calls out Clews from his end of the boat; but before I can think up an answer a zigzag stroke of lightning comes cutting down the sky from the clouds.

I can feel Mr. Rush shrink up. "Yuh don't like lightning?" I says.

"Not out here. And I don't like the pitching up and down of the boat."

"No harm in her pitchin'," I says. "She's forty foot long, with an air chamber to each end, and will take a lot o' pitchin' before she'll capsize."

"But a thousand feet of water under us!"

"A thousand feet ain't no deeper than ten to drown in," I says. "Sit in the bottom o' the boat and you'll not so easy pitch overboard."

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He sits in the bottom of the boat, me alongside with one eye on the shadow of Clews in the stern.

The wind comes sweeping down on us; nothing bad, but Mr. Rush thinks it is.

"I was brought up on a farm," he says.

"Don't the wind ever blow on a farm?" I ask.

"O, yes. I have heard it often shriek just so, especially through the bare winter trees over the frozen snow in winter. But there a man could take cover, while here on this wide deep ocean which never seems to be still—! Hear it now?" he says. "Hear that hissing sound, as if it had a million tongues, rushing down the sides of those high hills of water?"

"He talks like he's seeing snakes," I think, but: "They're maybe not so high if we could see 'em plainer," is what I say.

"They are too high for me. And the lightning—look!"

I look, but not at any lightning. I look to see what Clews was doing by the light of it; and he was looking our way, and I didn't like that.

More thunder comes rolling down on us and more lightning. And then more thunder.

"It must be like that on the front, don't you think?" says Mr. Rush. "The flashing of the guns and the long rolling crashes, one following another—like heavy artillery."

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"I ain't been to the front!" I says.

"Nor I, but can't you imagine it?" he says.

"A great thing, a ninventor's mind," I thinks—"to be scared to death of a thing, but taking notes of it the same time."

More lightning and thunder come rolling along. And with every roll of it I'm hoping nothing's happening to Lefty Hall on the raft, and with every flash I have a peek toward Clews; and every time I do he's having a peek my way, which sets me saying to myself:

"Clews 'll prob'ly kill Mr. Rush and after killing him or maybe before, he'll kill me—if I let him."

"Are you asleep, Mr. Rush?" calls out Clews by and by.

"No"—says Mr. Rush—"not yet."

"It's comin' soon," I say to myself. "Clews or me it'll have to be before mornin'. But will I start it or let him? He's got a nautomatic an' me ony a knife, an' he's younger 'n' huskier than me."

I think it over, and bimeby I says: "O well, I've seen a lot of 'em go into a ring with the odds on 'em an' the decision not goin' with the odds."

"Go to sleep if you can, sir," I says to Mr. Rush, and after a while he stretches himself in the bottom of the boat and soon is asleep; and

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no sooner he is than Clews starts for the bow end of the boat, and by the noise he makes coming he might as well be saying: "Mister Man, you're done!"

"Maybe I'm done at that," I thinks, and let myself down into the sea but hanging onto the gunnel with my knife stuck through my cap to keep the handle of it dry, and while he goes forward I'm going aft, him inside and me outside the boat. By the time I'm back over the gunnel and into the boat astern, I hear him calling from forward: "Green—Green! Where are you, Green?"

It's too dark for me to see him that far but I can imagine him, standing over where Mr. Rush is asleep, with a pistol, looking into the bow of the boat for me; and I start for him, stepping from one seat to the next on my toes. I come to the shadow of him just ahead of me, his head bent over looking for me.

"Come out o' there! Come out from under those oars! Y' hear me?" he says.

"I hear yuh," I say to myself, "'n' I'm comin', but not from under any oars," and I lean over and put down my left hand so's to be sure I got his neck located right. I feel him stiffen under the touch of my fingers, but he's too late. The handle of my knife is bone dry and I got a good grip

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on it and chock to the handle I drive it. And no man can take the length of a good wide six-inch blade where his neck and spine join and be much good after it. I catch him and ease him onto the gunnel while he's falling sideways. He's so near overboard that I see another little shove will send him all the way. I give him the shove, and all the noise to the whole thing was the little splash he made as he flopped into the water.

I feel around till I find where he dropped his pistol and stick that and my knife into my bosom, and go back to the stern of the boat and sit there meditating. The thunder and lightning 're gone. The wind and sea are moderating, making it a good night to meditate. "Here," I thinks, "is the second man I've done for since leavin' New York, and does it worry me? It does not. Why? My orders. It's a tough game, war—that's all I can make of it."

So I sit there thinking of a lot of things—of what's happened Hiker, if the trolleys are running the same as ever on Broadway, and if the barkeep in the Riverview is still getting sixty cents a throw for his bum brandy; and I'm still sitting there when the first of dawn comes creeping along. I look around and there's a raft near me, and a man lying flat out on the raft. I take an oar and scull the lifeboat over to it.

Hiker Joy

It's Lefty Hall on the raft, and he rolls over and lifts himself up like he's got a great stiffness all over when I hail him—not too loud.

"A busy night, Bill," he says, "hangin' onto a coupla ringbolts so's notta be washed overboard, and in the middle of it overboard goes my corner. Eighteen years I've had her and now to lose her!"

He climbs into the life-boat, sees Mr. Rush asleep, looks around, and: "Where's Clews?" he whispers.

"Clews never was here," I whispers back.

"Huh!"

"No. It was you here in this life-boat, not on that raft, all last night."

"Huh," he says, and spying some red spots on a seat, bends over and smells. "Blood!" he says, getting excited and waking up Mr. Rush, who looks around, and says: "Blood? Where's the blood?"

And he has to bend over and have a look too, and by and by to put a finger to a red spot and taste it. He looks into the bottom of the boat and finds some bigger spots.

"How came all this blood here?" he says.

"Remember my nose-bleed?" I says. "That time I borrowed your handkerchief?"

"Oh, yes! But where is my handkerchief?"

Good-bye the Horse-Boat

"I hove it overboard. I didn't s'pose you'd want it again."

"I don't. I merely like to know the reason for things."

He looks at Lefty and says: "Last night you appeared to be a taller, stouter, younger man."

Lefty looks at me.

"The, perils of a night like last night would shrink and age any man," I says; and to myself: "If I don't give this inquiring geezer something to think about he'll have me bustin' my head inventin' alibis." And then out loud again: "But don't you think we'd better be doin' something 'stead o' talkin'?" I says.

"What can we do—where are we?" he says.

"I dunno where we are," I says, "but there's the sun, an' war or no war, he's prob'ly still risin' in the yeast. What'd y' say if we sail toward where I think England or Scotland is?" And he says all right, and me 'n' Lefty make ready to rig up a sail, and the first chance I get while we're riggin' the sail up I slip my knife and Clews' pistol out of my bosom and into the sea, not knowing who'd pick us up and have a lot more questions for me to answer.

There's a haze all around us, but it's thinning out to the east'ard, and by and by the sun busts up out of the sea, and when it does there's a

Hiker Joy

bunch of ships steaming along, war-gray some and all camouflaged others. One is all solid white, and when she went by I was wishing I was a painting guy to make a picture of her—a solid silver ship riding across a great golden sun in the haze of a summer's morning.

Some destroyers are escorting the ships, and we wait for them to hustle right down to us. To make sure they would see us we stand up on the seats and wave our caps at them, and when we do—Bing! A shell comes screaming and busting and floats like it's a bunch of cotton balls a couple of hundred yards away. And Bing! comes another.

"What do they mean?" asks Mr. Rush.

"They prob'ly think we're a U-boat," says Lefty. "The English say they have a trick of riggin' up a sail to pass for a life-boat."

The destroyers are maybe three miles away. They fire a few more shells. None of 'em hit us. By and by one of 'em stands down and steams circles around us with one guy peeking at us with glasses from the bridge, and another pointing at us with a megaphone:

"We didn't scare you with those shells, I hope?" says the guy with the megaphone.

"O, no, we were delighted!" I says.

"Sorry, old chaps, but we can't take any

Good-bye the Horse-Boat

chances in this lumpy sea. Perfect weather for U-boats to work in y' know. Hold your present course and before the hour is out you will find yourself with a fleet of our mine sweepers."

He waves his hand and steams off. We sail on.

Little whitecaps of waves were rolling to all sides of us, but by and by they flatten out till everywhere the sea is all smooth again. Fine, we think, till along comes a lot of vapor. Vapor 'n' fog, all fog 'n' vapor it is, and there we are with no compass, not knowing were we sailing east or west or what way. And if a man wants to feel lonesome, let him try to sail a small boat through shifting winds and a thick fog in strange waters.

We're maybe sailing for two hours, me still in the stern steering her, when from out o' the fog comes a voice, a man's voice singing:

"Draw near, my happy shipmates all,
An' listen unto me.
Put match to pipe an' stow your gear
The whiles I tell to ye:
'Twas in the month of August
And the year was sixty-three,
The ship, she was the *Iron Duke*—
She sailed the cold North Sea.

And it's a too-roo-roo an' a too-roo-ray,
O shipmates all, 'twas a doleful day!

The Captain had his wife aboard,
Likewise deep villains three—

Hiker Joy

A passenger named William Bell
And a mate named Henry Lee.
This Bell he loved the Captain's wife
And chests of gold had he—
The mate he loved the yellow gold
And a willin' ear lent he.

And it's too-roo-roo and a too-roo-ree,
You see before you Hennery Lee!"

Lefty is in the bow of the boat 'most asleep, and Mr. Rush 'most ready to pass away, is in the waist, but the singing voice brings 'em wide awake.

Lefty's all set for hailing, when Mr. Rush comes to life. "Sh-h"—he says—"sh-h! not a word. The officers of the *Bucephalus* informed me that it is a common practice for U-boats to imitate English sailors, the better to lure them into their clutches."

The singing voice starts up again:

"The night was dark, the wind was fair,
The ship was sailin' free.
The Captain leaned far o'er the rail,
He feared no villainee.
A cry, a splash, and then no more—
The ship sailed fast and free.
And never a soul till this mo-moment
To hear of it from me.

And it's too-roo-roo and a too-roo-ray.
Take heed, shipmates, of a Judgment Day."

Good-bye the Horse-Boat

"That's no German voice," I says, and let a hail out of me.

There's no answer.

I hail once more. "Hi, you too-roo-roo man!" I yell.

There's no answer, but the first thing we know we almost bump into a stout-built, wide-sterned, yawl-rigged hull with red-brown sails in the fog.

Three men and a couple of young fellows are standing by the rail. "We've been torpedoed," I says.

"Oh, aye, torpedoed," says one of the men. And the two other men together say, "Oh, aye, torpedoed!"

"Come aboard—come aboard," says the first man then; and we go aboard; Mr. Rush setting down his bag and saying: "Thank the Lord that's safe." And Lefty saying: "Thank the Lord, we're safe."

The Flying Sailor

THIS yaviator who picked me up is an American navy ensign named Brown. (This is me, Hiker, writing again.) He's from some yaviation camp, and his flying chum not feeling well he'd come out for a little scouting trip alone, all of which when I come awake and he's got his engine fixed he tells me, slipping me a cigarette and pointing out a lot o' things in the machine the same time.

"Not the latest model," he says, "but a pretty good old boat."

I have a peek at the machine gun. "It must be great stuff turnin' that loose on a nenemy," I says.

"Try it," he says, and I slam out a few at a cigarette box he scales out on the water.

"You got a good eye for a kid," he says. "But come now—where'd you come from and what's your business?"

"I come off a deep-water craft that's now on bottom."

"Torpedoed?"

"I dunno what went wrong," I says, "but I got a message for somebody. I know you're all

The Flying Sailor

right, but it's a nimportant message and maybe oughta go to some gen'ral or admiral, if you know of any loafin' around anywheres."

"I don't know whether we got any admirals on tap at our station now," he says. "But I'll take you there and you can tell it to them."

It was a sorta calm night; but a little breeze, first in puffs and then steady, comes rippling along, making the water look pretty as anything in the moonlight. Brown takes off his yaviation cap to feel the air better, and no sooner he does than he begins pointing one ear into the wind, saying:

"You hear anything?"

Like a nauto engine noise it was and I'd been hearing it for a coupla minutes, but not knowing a noise like that wasn't a reg'lar thing around there, and not being too sure it ain't from the U-212, I didn't say anything about it.

"Probably one of our own planes. O, but if it was a Zep!" says Brown.

"Tough birds, those Zeps, ain't they?" I says.

"They must be, they got so many people over here bluffed, but I'd like to have a go at one."

He tells me some more about the Zeps, warming up his engines while he's talking, and talking some more after he'd got her started till the spray flying over us won't let us hear each other talk any

Hiker Joy

more unless we stick our mouths to each other's ears and yell.

We're bouncing ahead in long jumps and coming down splash! after every jump atop of a little wave or maybe two or three of them, and when we do the spray comes shooting over Brown and into my eyes and nose and mouth, 'specially my eyes, where I got no goggles and he has. He's in the bow steering and I'm a little place with the machine-gun pit right behind him, and he turns around to yell:

"We call this porpoising!"

"That's good!" I yell back, though knowin' what it is ain't making me feel any more dry.

The next thing I notice there's no more spray flying over me and I look down over the yedge of the boat, and 'stead of the little waves under us flying along in rows, they're now all still, like they're glued tight to some board.

"We're in the yair!" I yells out, and Brown looks over the yedge and yells back: "We're about 500 feet up!"

"How much higher we goin'?" I yells.

"Don't know—maybe 15,000 feet."

Jeezooks—15,000 feet! I look around for something to lash myself in with, and when I do Brown points to a coupla straps, and I slip 'em over my shoulders the same as he's got his.

The Flying Sailor

He's peeking ahead all the time. "There she is!" he yells and points, and where he points I see a speck shaped like a cigar floating up in the high moonlight.

"S'pose she's a Zep, what do I do?" I yell back at him next, and he tells me what I gotta do and how, talking in jumps like we have to with the wind whistling about eighty miles an hour past our ears.

I'm scared, but whatever's going to happen ain't with us yet, so I close my eyes and lean back, and it's like floating along on a nair mattress in the moonlight. Bimeby I look over the yedge to see will I be dizzy the same as maybe looking over the yedge of a high building; and when I do I spy a ship and she's looking like a little play boat stuck into a nocean that was like a sheet of glassy ice 'stead of what I knew it was—a lot of little waves hopping along in the moonlight; and looking at her I says to myself: "If a ship four or five hundred foot long don't look any bigger than a hummin' bird to us up here, then we can't be lookin' any bigger than a Jersey skeeter to that Zep up there—that's if she c'n see us a tall," which I'm hoping she can't.

The next thing is the yairship speck climbing higher. And we go climbing after her, trying to ketch up, but not ketching up much that way.

Hiker Joy

We can scoot along faster, but yairships are great climbers and flying boats ain't, Brown'd told me. Then I notice her getting bigger, meaning we're getting closer to her, but she's still a lot higher than us. And she's going higher all the time.

Bimeby I see a dark streak like on the water ahead, and a coupla winking lights above the streak. "The English coast," says Brown, "and if she goes on going past that streak it means she's a Zep, and bound inland."

She keeps on going. "A Zep all right!" Brown yells like he's tickled.

We're miles behind her, and we stay miles behind her, because Brown is meaning to get above her and come down on her from behind.

The Zep keeps on going up. "If she don't stop she'll soon be grabbin' the handle of the Dipper and havin' a drink," is what I'm thinking while I'm watching her.

The Zep goes through some clouds and we go through after her; and when we do, there we are—the clouds below us, and above us the moon and a few stars stuck in here and there in the sky.

I thought clouds would be thicker, but they're like a fog, and when we come outa them I spot a narrer strip of something on the ground, and it's

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winding and winding away like a long white shiny thing ahead of us till we can't see it any more. I poke Brown to show him and he nods to say he's seen it and it's a river.

We're pretty high by then and I'm feeling kinda chilly.

The river keeps winding and we keep follering it on till we see what looks like long alleys of lights crossing each other in the sky. Search-lights Brown tells me they are.

Bimeby I see a black mark like, stretching across the silver ribbon. A bridge across the river, Brown yells it is, and to get ready to hear the barrage guns soon.

I see them before I hear them—more yellow splashes of light than I can count coming up outa the yearth near the bridge, and up in the yair is about a thousand lights busting out like yellow-white stars just under where the Zep is flying. Which don't make me feel any too easy, cause where the Zep goes we have to go, and how will they know down on the ground who we are coming after her?

The Zep makes a turn and goes across the river. More barrage guns bust out on the other side of the river, but when they do there's a splash of light down below that's big as Union Square—bigger. And there's another. And an-

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other. And about the time of the fourth big splash I hear a big Bo-o-o-m!

"The Zep is bombing!" yells Brown. "We'll get to her yet!"

There's a few more big lumps of light and Bo-o-ms! from where the Zep bombs are landing, and about another million little twinkles of lights from the barrage guns below, and across the shining river we go too. There's more splashes from below and more shrapnel stars busting under us—some of them pretty close, but not close enough, we're going by so fast; and then the guns and shrapnel lay off; and it's all quiet and dark again below.

The wind is whistling through our struts and our stays, and about all I'm hearing is that whistle of the wind, and about all I'm seeing is the gas bag of the Zep, till something tells me there's something going on that I youghta know about. I have a peek around, and when I do, from what Brown had told was the gondola under the Zep's gas bag I see a lot of little spots of light coming, and coming so fast out of her they're like a string of lights. Before I can think what they mean I feel the boat swinging away, and the next thing I don't see any gondola, meaning Brown's swung her out of range, and Brown is talking fast over his shoulder. I don't hear half

The Flying Sailor

what he says, but if I didn't hear a word there's only one thing he can mean; so I say a quick little prayer and stand ready to shoot. The boat goes zooming up, but soon again I notice her nose is pointing toward the yearth again; and then we go shooting down toward the Zep.

"Pretty soon now," I says to myself, and as I do I see on top of the gas bag below me a shadow of a bird, like, but forty times bigger than the biggest bird I ever saw in my life. It's got two wings as wide as the whole gas bag and they're dancing from one side to the other of the top of the gas bag. "What's that thing?" I think, and then I remember the moon is behind us and the big bird is the shadow of us on the bag.

The shadow slides off, meaning we're moving to the other side of the Zep, and soon from under the bag I can see the string of little lights coming again, and there's sounds like a lot of husky skeeters or something flying past my ears.

"Be sure you're on your target before you fire," Brown had said. "No use unloading a tray of bullets without hitting anything and not getting time perhaps to load her up again!"

I'm not too sure I'm on the target when I get ready to point the gun. But those pings going past my ear are hurrying me up, but before I can shoot the Zep makes a quick turn. Brown turns

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with her—sharp! and when he does our boat lies down 'most on her side and our wings point 'most straight up and down. I'm looking, when I look—which I don't do too long—straight down to the yearth. I'm glad I'm strapped in.

I have a peek at Brown, who is having a squint at one of his gauges with a little flashlight. He shakes his head and then he yells:

"We maybe got enough at that!"

"Enough what?" I yells.

"Enough gas to make the sea!"

"Jeezooks! meanin' we can't land on land?"

"Not alive. This is a hydro. I hope to the Lord the gas'll hold out!"

"I'm double hopin'," I yell back.

"Stand by to shoot!" says Brown, and I move the gun all around to make sure she ain't rusty in her hinges. Up and down and all around—every way except dead ahead I can swing it, which is maybe lucky for Brown, who's dead ahead.

All this time Brown's been holding off till he's ready to make a sure dive at her. The Zep is shooting up again, and zooming, zooming we go after her, the river all this time winding handy below us, meaning the Zep is going back the way she came.

Brown goes as high as he has to and then begins to drop down, and soon we're handy to her

The Flying Sailor

gondola again, meaning we got to be ready to dodge a few more bullets. If the bullets don't hit me or Brown, they still got a chance to get to our gas tank, meaning a straight three-mile drop to the yearth with no floors to stop at on the way, which Brown got me all set for before this by saying not to worry about that. "No suffering to it," says Brown. "We'd be dead before we ever hit the ground."

"It oughta cheer a fuhla up on the way down," I think. "But I wouldn't mind sufferin' a little and stoppin' short o' the ground."

We're getting the handiest we been yet to the Zep, and Brown gives me a sign that means this time we're going to try for her sure.

"Take your time—but not too much time," he hollers.

"Not too much is right," I say, thinking of those little ping boys whistling by my ear, and I waited long enough to point the gun and no longer, and begin to cut loose at the gas bag, wondering how much I youghta allow with the Zep and us both going about seventy miles an hour.

Twenty bullets I musta pumped out, and not a sign from the Zep. "You're sure a punk shot," I'm thinking; and maybe another twenty I pump out when—O——!

The sky all around went red and with it comes

Hiker Joy

a nexpllosion that picks up our boat and tosses it like we're on a big wave at sea. I hook both my arms to the machine gun and wait for that three-mile drop to the yearth, which I know is coming to us by the way we're being bumped around.

A reg'lar airo plane maybe, but no hydro c'n do tricks like this—not and get away with it, I'm thinking. And there's a hot smell comes which something tells me ain't good for me, and I stop breathing. When I can't hold in any longer, I grab another little mouthful of air and look up and around to see what's doing.

The boat's rocking and bouncing, but Brown is right there steering her. We're what Brown'd told me was volplaning down fast, and there's the yocean under us. We musta been pretty handy to the sea before we started the shooting, but being so busy I didn't notice it.

The next thing is our engine ain't working and we're going down like shooting the chutes. She'd shoot a thousand feet maybe, and then Brown'd fetch her head up and level her out. About the time I'd think she's going to fall Brown would send her shooting the chutes again. We made eight or ten shoots and then splam! we hit the water—not so very hard considering.

I don't say or do anything for a coupla minutes, 'cept get my breathing going reg'lar again.

The Flying Sailor

Then I have a look around, and there's the Zep blazing and drifting behind us. Bimeby she flops into the sea and the blaze of her goes out.

"A tough death for 'em," I says.

"Oh, I don't know," says Brown. "Two seconds after her bag caught fire they were in ashes. No suffering to it—dead before they knew what happened."

"Did any guy who's been through it ever come back to say that?" I says.

"Of course not, but they have no kick coming. They did all the damage they could before we got 'em."

"What d'y'think o' guys doin' that kind o' work?" I says.

"Why it's their orders," says Brown.

"Meanin' you'd do it?"

"If I were ordered? Why surely. What else could I do? If I didn't like it I could take a court-martial one day, and next day face a firing squad."

"Then what do papers mean when they lam-baste the crews of Zeps for droppin' bombs?"

"Bunk. Every fellow I know at my station is hoping to get a fightin' or bombin' plane, and we're not being drilled to make sure there's nobody walking the streets under us before we drop a bomb. Bunk, kid, and dangerous doctrine.

Hiker Joy

It makes me and every other aviator out to be a murderer. No use saying the enemy soldier or sailor is inhuman when he's only carrying out orders. He's got to carry out his orders. So have we. If they're going to blame anybody, let 'em blame the higher up people who give us our orders. Bunk, kid, or if it isn't bunk, then they're foolish. And whatever you do in life, kid, don't go foolish. But let's pass on to first aid to wrecked aviators," and he hauls out a can of beef and a kinda nickel plated bottle which has about a quart of hot coffee in it when he screws the top off; and while we drink and eat the yedge of a sun that looks like a million-dollar gold piece is rising above a sea that's all smooth and slate-colored, making us feel pretty good.

"And now for second aid to wrecked aviators," says Brown, and hauls out a pair of pigeons, and around the leg of each of them he ties a piece of tissue paper, saying on it what's happened us and about where on the ocean he thinks we are.

He throws the pigeons into the air and they fly around in a circle, and one of them goes off toward where the land oughta be. The other flies off in a coupla more circles, and then comes fluttering down and roosts out on the end of one of the wings.

"Shish-h!" says Brown, and "Shish-h!" I

The Flying Sailor

say, but the pigeon don't shish a tall, not till I crawl out and shove him off. This time he flies away.

"They ought to make camp in half an hour," says Brown. "Then an hour for a big hydro to get ready and get back here—call it two hours to be sure."

The sun comes up and warms us so that we slip out of our Teddy Bear suits, and the slaty sea turns to a blue color and comes gurgling in like a baby with a bottle, with a little white collar to where the yedges of it breaks in around the wides of our pontoons, but loosening up one of what Brown calls a wing pontoon while it's gurgling in.

"But that little pontoon was loose before. Lucky it didn't fall off while we were up in the air," says Brown.

"Meanin' what?" I ast.

"We'd probably be spread out over some of the map of England instead of sitting here talking about it."

"It's cert'nly a great life for you guys," I say, "if nothin' happens yuh, ain't it?"

The blue sea keeps swishing in around us; and all around us, 'specially on the sky, we keep a lookout. Brown looks at his watch to see how the time is getting on, but it's stopped. We guess

Hiker Joy

at how long two hours is. Then we guess at three hours, going by the sun. Then at four, five, and six hours. By that time Brown says he shouldn't wonder if something happened the pigeons.

"They were from a new lot anyway," says Brown, and takes out his last cigarette. "One of the thirty-four makes," says Brown, "which are advertising how they are winning the war for us. Here—" and gives me half the cigarette.

"Thanks," I says. "An' double thanks for not tellin' me I'm too young to be smokin' 'em."

There's about eight puffs in the half of the ciggy, but it helps.

We turn to watching the sea again, and bimeby some pieces of doors and things from a wreck come drifting by, and next a man standing up with a life-belt around him. He's dead.

The sun goes down below a lot of smoky clouds and soon all we see is stars; and bimeby the moon. But more clouds come and shut out the moon and stars both, and it gets cold and we get into our Teddy Bear suits again.

We think we hear a noise, and put our ears down close to the water, and we do. It's the noise of a propeller. Then we hear voices, and they're pretty handy, because they're the voices of men

The Flying Sailor

who ain't talking too loud. Then we see the loom of a hull and a ship's smokestacks against the yair, and when we do we let a yell out of us. She's carrying one light like a steaming light to where her masthead would maybe be; but when we yell the light goes swinging around and away she goes, and as long as we can hear her propellers with our ears close to the water, they are chugging it out double-time.

"They must've thought we were a U-boat," says Brown. "I hope they did, because then they will hurry in and report us and some ship will come out to look for us."

"And if it's no better than a battleship and she all set to blow us out of water, I'd sure welcome her," I says.

A little breeze comes and blows away the clouds and shows us the moon rolling big and white across the sky. And the stars show again—the little winky ones and the big steady going guys—but they musta got cold, for out they go, and when they do we feel cold ourselves, and lonesome—till the sun comes up again.

The sun is no more than up when a nairoplane comes flying out from land. She's maybe half a mile high and we're all set to give her three cheers, but she goes sailing right on by.

"What d'y'know about that loafer?" I says.

Hiker Joy

"She may have seen us, but being on special duty could not stop," says Brown.

"Meanin' what?" I ast.

"She'll report us, and then a patrol boat will come out and get us." Which sounds good, and bimeby he adds on: "I hope no neutral ship comes along in the meantime and tempts us to be picked up."

I says, "Why?"

"Because," says Brown, "they'd have to intern us. You wouldn't like to be confined, would you, in some countr'y like Norway or Denmark or Holland till the war is over?"

I don't see where being adrift in the middle of the North Sea or wherever it is we are has it on being tucked away in some cosy little country with things to eat and drink and maybe somebody to slip a fuhla the makin's for the rest of the war; but I don't tell him, because already I'm seeing that he's what Bill Green would call a noptimist, meaning a guy who expects to get all the close decisions; which is all right, of course, and maybe a fuhla to be a naviator oughta be a noptimist, but it's no way to bet.

We wait for the patrol boat or the battle cruiser, or whatever it is going to come along and pick us up, but all that comes along is a fog—a nice wet fog. The fog drifts off and we spot a steamer

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coming straight for us and we stand up and yell, and when we do, around she turns and goes the other way.

"I'm beginning to get sore on U-boats," says Brown. "I know it's their business, but they've put such a fear of strange crafts into people that a man might's well let himself go straight to the bottom and have it over with as be wrecked around here."

He begins to talk about his chums at the station, wondering what they're thinking about his being so long away. "They'd be surprised if they knew what the old boat's been through since she left, wouldn't they? And more surprised perhaps if they knew where I was right now. But not one of them at that who wouldn't be glad to swap places with me if they knew, I'll bet. And your chums the same, kid — wouldn't they?"

"I got chums who might be surprised to know where I am, maybe," I says. "But I ain't sure about them wantin' to swap places with me if they knew. If I was where they are, I know I wouldn't."

"Would it jolt you, kid, if you thought you might never see your home again?" says Brown.

I don't want to add any gloom to what we got already by saying I got no home, so I only say:

Hiker Joy

"Yeah," having a moving-picture in my mind of the last time I saw it, of uncle-in-law, he trying to fetch me one with a towel roller and me going out the kitchen window.

"A man's got to live a few thousand miles away from home for a while," Brown goes on, "to know what home means, don't he?"

I think of my fine dry seckselsior box in that cellar near the Brooklyn Bridge and—"You're right he does," I say, meaning it this time.

"Before the war," says Brown, "I was working where I had to drive a gang of men outdoors. Hard work. Some days, perhaps in winter, I'd be feeling all in and thinking it was a devil of a world to have to make a living in; but when I'd come home that evening, sometimes all soaked in rain or snow, there would be my mother at the door to take my coat and ask me how I made out, and there would be my little sister to run and get my slippers. Even my fresh kid brother would say: 'Tough goin' to-day, was it?' And hand over the best chair before the fire and the evening paper all opened out to the sporting page, and the table would be all set for dinner, and afterward perhaps my father would pass me a good cigar while we're sitting before the fire, and perhaps a few girl chums of my sisters would drop in and sing a few songs and play a little,

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and—but thinking of those things cheers a man up and makes him feel blue the same time, don't they?"

"Yeah," I said, "'specially papa slippin' me the good smokes."

Night comes, but this night no moon or stars to look at, which makes a long night of it, and in the night we feel our boat bouncing around under us. When the first little light of day comes there's white caps for us to look at on the water; and while we're looking at them, a sea comes along and knocks off one or two little wings astern, and when it does the tail of our boat begins to flop around.

Brown don't like that. "She'll be leaking next," he says.

This pontoon ain't a boat or a fish. She has a head and tail like a big fish, but there's no fins on her like a fish oughta have, nor no keel like any decent boat, and her sides are straight like a box, all of which makes her bounce around. So bimeby when it gets a little more rough we have to tuck down into the place where Brown does his steering to keep from being rolled overboard.

Brown guesses right about her going to leak astern. Her fancy tail begins to settle in the water, and the next thing is the water crawling toward us. Bimeby she's low down enough all

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over to make us be standing to our knees in water when we are in the bow.

We're feeling hungry, and more thirsty than we're hungry, meaning we're pretty thirsty. A rain comes drizzling down, and we stretch out and lap it up off the top planks of the pontoon for as far as we can reach from the cock-pit. They're nice new-varnished planks, pretty to look at, but never meant for grub. Soon we're trying to wipe off our tongues and spitting out all over the place to get the taste out of our mouths, and Brown is saying:

"The way I feel now I wouldn't care if a U-boat came along and picked us up."

"Or even one o' those neutral ships," I says. "An' it wouldn't have to be a Norwegian or a Dane—a Chinaman or a Patagonian would do me fine."

"You should be more scared," says Brown.

"Scared? The most I been doin' since leavin' New York is gettin' scared. I'm scared enough right now, an' ready to be more scared if it'll get us off this wreck. But there's no sense bein' scared without reason, Bill Green says. Bein' a little bit scared is all right, says Bill—it makes a fuhla step a little more lively to keep ahead of whatever's after him. But bein' scared so's to worry—that don't get a guy anywhere, Bill says."

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Bimeby Brown says: "Well, we did a good job even if we're never saved. We got that Zep. But too bad for you that you're not a little older and in uniform."

I says "Why?"

"You would get credit, or your folks would for your part."

"O? What I oughta done," I says, "before goin' up with you was to look around for a uniform an' a recruitin' officer somewheres, hah?"

"You would have got a medal for it. Wouldn't you like a medal?"

"Sure, an' right now if I could eat it."

Which I suppose makes Brown say: "What do you think would go pretty good to eat now? Stop and think up something nice 'n' juicy."

"I don't have to stop 'n' think," I says. "A case o' canned peaches. No, make it two cases—I c'n eat one myself."

"I was thinking pears myself," says Brown. "But you're right, kid—peaches are juicier than pears. But wait—I 'most forgot," and he hauls out a pair of dice.

"Where yuh goin' to roll 'em?" I says.

"We're not going to roll 'em. We'll stand watch and watch chewing them—ten minutes watches, you first."

So we take turns sucking the dice, guessing

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when the ten minutes is up, till we suck the spots clean off them. By then we're both of us seasick from the bouncing around of the boat, which don't pitch and roll like any reg'lar boat, but goes every which way.

"If we only had something in our stomachs to be seasick right!" says Brown. But there's nothing, so we take turns heaving up all we ain't got, Brown on the port side and me on the starboard side the pontoon.

Bimeby we can't even dry-heave any more, and we're looking out on the sea when Brown spots a raft drifting by, and on top of the raft a little bag like women wear hanging to their wrists. It's only a little ways off and I swim out and tow it in, and we're both of us all set for finding something we can maybe eat. Brown opens the bag and has a peek. And I have a peek. He hauls a swell-looking bottle of zinc ointment from the bag.

"Can't you see that noble dame," says Brown, "rushing back as the ship was sinking—at the very last moment rushing back to save that precious ointment? Can't you see her?"

"Sure," I says. "Plain. She's got a Roman nose—a fat dame."

"With a high chest, and—God bless her, yes—a feather in her hat!"

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He's going to heave it back into the sea, but I grab it and rub it on my feet which 're swelling up like they're going to have some new kind of a disease.

There's more than the fat dame coming to worry us. The sea's been making since morning, and now every white cap rolls up to us like it wants to see can it knock another feather off our tail, or maybe a little bit off one of our wings. We wonder will they hang on much longer, and when they go will the pontoon capsize or sink or what'll it do? Whatever it does it ain't a nawful long time now to dark, and it's bad swimming around—swimming around not knowing where a fuhla is in the day, but at night—! I rub more ointment into my feet so's to forget it. But I don't forget it much. I don't know what Brown is thinking alongside me, but "Jeezooks!" I say to myself—"I been dodgin' the trolleys 'n' cops of Brooklyn 'n' the Yeast side an' nothin' happenin' me since I'm a kid, an' the first time I come to Europe I'm wrecked on a craft that ain't a fish or a bird or a ship in the middle of the North Sea, or wherever it is we are!"

I'm thinking like that wondering will I ever see the Battery again, and are the Jack o' Lanterns having their runs on mystic nights, and where Bill is and Mr. Nugent, when I think I see smoke.

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Brown and me 're leaning against each other and I think he's asleep and so I open and close my eyes three times before I bother him. But when I nudge him he ain't asleep a tall.

"You see it too? Good!" he says.

"Looks like it's headed this way to me," I says bimeby.

"It does look it. But sh-h-! Not a sound! We do and she'll turn and scoot the other way!" I'm writing this easy here, but we're both of us whispering like a coupla sick frogs, and every whisper like a knife cutting into our throats, they're so swelled up and sore. Our hands and feet and our faces are all swelled up too.

The smoke and the ship under it comes straight on and when it's maybe half a mile away she steams once around us, and then she comes straight for us and over goes a boat, and jumping it comes with half a dozen gobs rowing to alongside the pontoon.

There's a young officer in the stern and he salutes Brown and Brown salutes him and a coupla gobs reach for Brown, but he points to me, so they help me into the boat first. Then they help Brown in, and hustle for the ship which I see is a destroyer when we get near it.

We get alongside and— "Careful—careful" somebody is saying to Brown who's standing up

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in the boat—trying to stand up. “Destroyer? American destroyer?” says Brown.

“Sure, what else?” says the same voice from her deck.

It sounds like Mr. Nugent’s voice only what’s he doing aboard a destroyer?

“American destroyer!” says Brown and looks like he’s looking for a flag somewheres. There ain’t any there but he salutes anyway.

“Wait,” says Mr. Nugent’s voice to Brown who’s starting to go up the ladder.

“I can make it, sir,” says Brown, but he don’t make it. Only for three or four gobs he’d fallen into the bottom of the boat.

“And how are you, son?” says Nugent’s voice when it comes my turn. And I have a peek and it is Mr. Nugent in a nofficer’s uniform. And he has another peek at me and—“Hullo-o, Hiker!” he says. “How are you, son?”

“Fine ’n’ dandy,” I says, and try to go up the ladder, and when I do—“Grab him—quick!” says Mr. Nugent.

“What for?” I start to say—but I don’t. I guess I pass out about then, ’cause the next thing I’m somewheres below and they’re feeding me with a spoon.

The next thing I wake up after another sleep.

“Where’s Mr. Nugent?” I says; and a gob

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goes out and comes back with the Mr. Nugent who's in a navy officer's rig with two wide stripes and one narrer one on his sleeve.

"What've you been doing since I saw you last, Hiker?" he says.

"Mostly tryin' not to be scared to death," I says; and I tell him what's happened me since I left the hoss-boat. "I got the belt here," I says, and I reach for it to show him, but it's gone.

"I took it off you," says Mr. Nugent. "It is now in London where we will both go by and by to clean up the last of that gang, I hope."

"Where's Bill?" I says.

"I can't tell you."

"Gone, is he?"

"I hope not."

"The girl all right?"

He smiles like. "I'll tell you about her and myself later. Yes, she's all right. But you better lie down again."

The doctor comes along then and says yes I'd better lie down, too, and they pour about a bucket of some kinda broth into me; and then I lie down thinking: "It's all right bein' wrecked an' picked up, but where's the fun if Bill's gone?"

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NEXT time I come awake there's another officer sitting alongside my bunk. The captain of the destroyer he is, and a good scout. He asks me a few questions and the next thing I'm being rigged out in a gob's uniform. They have to saw about a foot off the pants legs and take about three reefs in the rest of it and what they call the blouse, and stuff the shoes where my feet don't fill 'em with cotton waste.

But I feel pretty swell and I go up on deck where a bunch of gobs tell me that they dunno but they'll make me the ship's mascot 'stead of a parrot who got washed overboard and a goat who died of eating canned willie. Our ship is a destroyer and she's one of a bunch of destroyers who're what they call convoying a lotta freight steamers, and I'm watching the steamers bowing up and down to the yocean and the destroyers zigzagging all around 'em when a nofficer who the gobs call the Exec comes along the deck and asts me don't I want to help him out in the ship's navigation, and I say "Sure!" and go up with him to what they call the chart room, where my job is

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to keep an eye on a coupla paper weights. If they bounce off then the chart 'll curl up and he can't navigate the Exec says.

So I'm there tending to the paper weights when Mr. Nugent comes in. He's been standing four tough hours of watch on the bridge, and he oughta been feeling tired, but since I seen him on the hoss-boat he's acting a lot more younger and snappy looking, and he comes in now jiggling a little and humming a little and rolling a cigarette.

I look at him to see will he slip me the makin's and he does only he has to add on: "Smoking and all kinds of excitement at your age—what d'y' suppose you'll have to look forward to when you grow up?"

"He could fall in love and get married couldn't he?" says the Exec, and stabs a sharp pencil point where he thinks the ship is on the chart and then says: "O dam," and rubs it out, meaning she ain't there a tall, and then he adds on: "Nujie, you didn't finish telling how you come to be married so suddenly."

Mr. Nugent who's laid down on the transom and is blowing smoke rings into the air, he sits right up, saying: "So I didn't. Well the first officer of that horse-boat was in the enemy's pay all the time, and when she hit that mine and he rushes Margie into the motor boat I get into

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the boat too. Later when it's so dark that we can't see the other boats or the life rafts he tells me to get out of the boat.

“‘Where 'll I get to?’ I says. His answer is to say: ‘Miss Rush, this man is a German spy,’ and to pull an automatic on me, but I’m all set for that and beat him to it. I drop him—dead, and there we are, Margie and I, alone in a motor boat when a little blow comes up. Margie still thinks that was a great storm and me a hero for pulling her through it.”

“No harm the right woman thinking that way about you, is there?” says the Exec.

“Maybe not, only some day I may have to live up to being a hero and then what? Anyway, this thunder and lightning comes along, and there’s a little sea running, though perhaps more wind than sea. But about all I have to do is to put her stern to it, give her steerage way and let her ride it out. It’s all over in two or three hours, and next morning we run into some limie patrol boats, who nearly blow us out of water making sure we’re not a masquerading U-boat, and then take us ashore, and that evening while we’re watching the sun set from the dining-room windows of a little inn in the country we talk the thing over.”

“And between that ship’s sinking and the little

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inn more chance for the heart to heart stuff than in five years of peace times ashore, I'll bet," says the Exec.

"Five? Twenty-five!" says Mr. Nugent. "We sit there and talk, and even with her uncle missing, after I've shown her he has a fine chance to be picked up we agree there's no reason in the world why we shouldn't get married. And next day we do get married. And there she is now in a little cottage on that hilly island just inside the naval base, and already she can pick out our destroyers from the limies. And when it's this little old flivver comes up to the barrage—ah-h!"

"Ah-h what?" says the Exec.

"Another hod of coal into the grate and from out the closet the easy slippers and the smoking jacket she bought me."

"Greets you with battle cries, too, I suppose?" says the Exec.

"Greets me and speeds me with little prayers," says Mr. Nugent, but not smiling as much this time. "And she thinks every officer and enlisted man over here would be much better off for having a wife waiting for him when in he comes from the dangers of the sea in these war days."

"Wait, wait a second!" says the Exec. "Your wife said something then. But here's the other

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side of that. Now you're married. Suppose a life and death chance turns up—would you or wouldn't you——?"

"You'll hook me into none of your arguments to-day," says Mr. Nugent. "I don't know what I'd do—who does till he's up against it? And I'm going below now to fill in the diary I'm keeping for her."

And here's where the wimmin 'n' girls part comes in. Bill says one time: "Why don't yuh say somethin' about wimmin 'n' girls?" And I say: "What do I know about girls or wimmin?" And Bill says: "What do a lot o' guys know that write about 'em? Yuh can put down what yuh hear 'n' see, can't yuh?"

And that's what I'm putting down now—what I hear 'n' see. Mr. Nugent goes outa the chart room and it looks like a good argument is ended, but the Exec is a great guy to get to what he calls the bottom of things, and bimeby when a chief machinist's mate—a wise, tough-looking old bird named Masters—comes in to report something, and he reports it and is going out, the Exec holds him up, saying:

"Here, Masters, here's a question which has nothing to do with your line of duty, but you're older than most of us in the ways of life: Will a man be any the better or worse a'fighting man for

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having some woman waiting for him every time he comes ashore?"

"Is it a nold or young man?" says Masters.

"Old or young, what matter?" says the Exec.

"Ah, sir, but don't it? It is the young has the illusions—or delusions—and without them where would be the wars?"

"But young people don't start wars?" says the Exec.

"No, sir, but it's young men who have to finish them. Is he married or single, sir?" says Masters.

The Exec says he's married, and Masters says how long?

"M-m-m—a few weeks," says the Exec.

"Does he call that bein' married?" says Masters. "Now when he's married twenty-eight years like me——"

"Twenty-eight years married?" says the Exec, "and you go to war!"

"It's a great place, war, to forget your troubles, sir. But what sort is the woman, sir?" says Masters.

"I never saw her, but take any woman; take your own wife," says the Exec.

"Aye, aye, sir, but which one? I'm havin' my third one now," says Masters.

"Good Lord!" says the Exec. "Take any

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one of 'em. Take your present wife; will the thought of her make you any less or any more of a hero?"

"I am no hero, sir," says Masters. "I'm a plain man. But should a day of trial come I hope I'll not disgrace my trainin' or my navy, sir."

Masters goes out, and when he does and Bingo White, seaman first class, happens to be passing down from the bridge, the Exec flags him saying: "You are not married, White?"

"No sir," says Bingo, "but I hope to be, sir—I'm engaged."

"Good! Just the man—young, happy, and the joy of life before you. What do you think, White—would you risk your life all the quicker, or not so quick, because of a young girl waiting for you ashore?"

"Why, sir," says Bingo, "I dunno's I ever thought about it."

"But think of it now. Suppose you died taking a chance—how would the young lady take it?"

"Why," says Bingo, "less her letters are all camouflage she'd feel pretty bad."

"Then she would be just as glad to see you—no matter what your record was?" says the Exec.

"Oh, I dunno's she'd want to see any red ink marks against my record, sir."

"Then you have talked it over with her?"

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“Why”—Bingo’s one of those guys who it don’t hurt him to smile—“I don’t remember’s ever wasting any o’ my liberty talkin’ that stuff,” says Bingo. And like he wants not to show any disrespect, he adds on: “My girl always sorta made me feel she’s believin’ that no matter what it is—live or die—I’ll be there when the time comes.”

Before the Exec can call in any more of the crew I slip out on deck to see what’s doing with the convoy. They’re still there rolling from one side to the other in what they call columns, and the rolling means there’s a ground swell on, and all the weather sharks aboard say a ground swell means bad weather somewheres, or if there ain’t there will be.

Bimeby we turn the convoy loose and when we do the ranking officer’s ship signals: “Make the best of your way home,” meaning we’re all to beat it for our base. And nobody loses any time starting, and we’re swinging along—not racing o’ course, but taking notice that nobody’s passing us, and everybody’s feeling pretty good, because after keeping a week’s lookout night and day for U-boats—well, no matter how much nerve a guy has he can have a little more and still not hate to have a little lay off from that kind of a game for a few days.

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So everybody's feeling pretty good, and nobody feeling any better than Mr. Nugent, who's putting in most of his time skipping up to the bridge to see how many knots she's making, and then back to the chart room to see how many more miles she's got to go, and the Exec peeking up at him says: "Oh, but how you will hate to get home!" And he no sooner says it when a gob on watch yells out something, and the captain and watch officer up with their glasses and our course is shifted, and the next thing we're running handy to a ship rolling to her rail. We're rolling to our rail, too, but we're swinging through the swell at thirty knots, which is some excuse for rolling, while this ship is laying still, meaning she's prob'ly logy with water inside her.

She's a big what they call a turret ship, meaning her sides are built out from where her water line oughta be—a new invention—so when a U-boat plunks a torpedo into her it won't have so much chance to blow her up. The captain sends a boat's crew in charge of Mr. Nugent to have a look into her. And he goes and comes back and reports she's the *Lincoln Castle* from Southampton and she's been torpedoed or mined, and is loaded down with grain, flour, and canned goods with nobody aboard.

"A pity she could not be brought to port—

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Lord knows they need her cargo right now in England," says the captain.

"I'd like to take a gang of men, sir," says Mr. Nugent, "and try to get her into port."

The captain says it wouldn't be right to order men to her the way the weather's looking, and when he does: "How about volunteers, sir?" says Mr. Nugent.

"If you can get 'em—yes," says the captain, and the second he says it a deck-load of gobs begin to move toward Mr. Nugent.

The third watch officer is a snappy, young one, straight from what they call Annapolis, and he steps up and touches Mr. Nugent on the shoulder, saying: "How about me taking that job off your hands?"

"Why you especially?" says Mr. Nugent.

"I'm not married, you know."

"Cheer up," says Mr. Nugent, "you may be yet," and he begins to look over the men, saying: "You're all plenty good enough for me. But I'll first pick out four machinist's mates, two quarter-masters, and a radio man."

And out steps old Masters saying: "Machinist's mate, right here, sir. She's an oil-burner an' I can take that kind apart, sir." And Bingo White noses in behind him saying: "Quarter-master, sir, an' if we gotta do our own boosting,

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then I've stood to the wheel of a Gloucester fisherman for ten hours, she carryin' four lowers in a livin' gale."

Bimeby I slip up to Mr. Nugent saying: "How about me for a messenger to scoot up and down ladders and in 'n' out the passageways?" And he takes me, and we shove off and coming alongside the wreck our boat 'most capsizes by the swell hoisting us onto where her turret deck is bulging out. But we get aboard her and hoist up the boat, and Mr. Nugent hurries down to her fireroom, where old Masters right away says: "There's a few gadgets here I never been ship-mates with before, sir, but never fear I'll soon dope 'em out, sir."

And he does, and soon she's going along at what the revolutions in her engine room said was 'most six knots an hour.

"Six knots? Fine!" says Mr. Nugent. "Keep that up and we'll have her in port in two days."

The destroyer is all this time standing by us, but they get an S O S from a ship torpedoed somewhere, and when they do she runs alongside and the captain hollers out: "It's sixty to seventy miles to that ship's position, Nugent, and I don't like the looks of the weather around here—better take you off, hadn't I?"

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But Mr. Nugent says he don't want to be taken off just when they're putting a little breath o' life into the old lady. "But there's no reason why any of you men should be taking any extra chances—whoever wants to can go back," he says to us.

But none of them want to go back. "A ship this size with a four or five million dollar load o' grub in her—jeeppers no!" they all say.

"All right," says our destroyer captain. "I'll be back as soon as I can. But don't forget, Nugent, about handling a boat alongside a turret ship—they're ugly brutes that way."

"And the cottage on the hill—don't forget that," sings out the Exec, and the destroyer scoots off.

We're plugging along fine, when up from below comes the what they call in the navy a carpenter's mate, who's been sent below to sound her, and he's come to report, saying: "Eight foot three of water in the for'ard hold sir."

"It's the hole in her bow," says Mr. Nugent. And—"put her stern to it," he says to Bingo White who's at the wheel.

So Bingo rolls her around through what they call the trough of the sea and gets her going stern first. But she don't do so good that way. Masters pretty soon is talking up through the

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tube saying he can't get any more than two knots out of her now.

"Only two? Well, not so bad," says Mr. Nugent. "Keep that up and we'll have her in port in six days."

There's a young gob named Whinners looking in from the wing of the bridge: "Say Bingo, we get away with this and we'll all be heroes, huh?" says Whinners.

"We don't get away with it and we'll be heroes too—ony we won't be hearin' about it then," says Bingo.

"The what they call the selectmen of my town," says Whinners, "voted to put the names of all of us who're killed in the war on a marble slab, and set it up near the Town Hall where four roads cross so no tourists can miss the names—all heroes."

"And some night some express truck 'll come outa the dark and roll over your marble slab and—Bingo!—no more heroes in your town," says Bingo.

"O well," says Whinners, "a guy can't expect to be a hero forever."

Having something to worry over always makes gobs more cheerful, and they're kidding each other along that way till: "Here comes the gloom guy," says Whinners, meaning the carpenter's mate.

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"Eight foot ten for'ard and seven foot eight aft," says the carpenter's mate.

"That so? She must 've been hit aft too," says Mr. Nugent. "I'd better have a look," and he goes below decks, and bimeby is back saying: "Steaming bow first we take in water, and steaming stern first we take in water. Too bad we can't steam the old rip sideways. Let's try pumping her out." And whistles down to Masters and he connects up the pumping gear.

But after about an hour of it and no gaining on the water he tells them to lay off saying: "We'll send her ahead easy and see what."

Bimeby the carpenter's mate comes again saying: "Nine foot six for'ward, eight foot five aft, sir."

"All right," says Mr. Nugent. "Hiker, tell the radio operator to raise the destroyer, and say we are leaking freely fore and aft—but no more than that—no alarm stuff, tell him."

The radio man sends it off, and bimeby back comes the answer from the destroyer: "Fifty more people to take off torpedoed ship. Keep me informed."

"Fifty of them and sixteen of us," says Mr. Nugent, when he reads the radio—"and suffering people probably among them. No use worrying them for another while."

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He goes out on the bridge wing and watches the ocean, which 'stead of having a noily-like smooth swell on is now all busted out into little white seas. And the wind is beginning to blow.

The carpenter's mate comes along while Mr. Nugent is studying the sea, saying: "Ten foot four for'ard, nine foot two aft, sir."

"All right," says Mr. Nugent.

Another radio comes saying: "Last of shipwrecked people alongside. Give position and weather conditions."

The white seas by this time 're slapping up against our sides in good shape and the wind crying like it's mourning for a lot o' dead people through her old stays and guys.

Mr. Nugent comes in from the wing and writes: "Have steamed fourteen miles northwest. Sea choppy, wind strong from southeast. Moderate tide from east," making me read it to be sure the radio man gets it right.

"The Executive—he's a shark on navigation—he'll lay a course like a beam of light for us," I hear Mr. Nugent saying as I go out the door.

The radio man gets that off and soon has an answer: "Leaving here to get you. Keep me informed."

The carpenter's mate comes into the wheel-

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house saying: "Eleven foot for'ard, nine foot ten aft, sir."

"And the bulkhead doors?" asks Mr. Nugent.

"Still holding, sir."

"Good! All right," says Mr. Nugent, and goes out on the bridge wing and has another look at the sea. And the sea is now breaking—smash! against our rail and across our boat deck where there's no deckhouses to stop it, and looking up at her smoke-stacks, and it being too dark to see good, a coupla gobs 're guessing whether she's taking solid water down them or is it only spray swashing into them when she rolls low down.

Another message comes asking how we're getting on, and Mr. Nugent writes: "If the bulkhead doors hold we may last two hours."

I take that down and back comes the answer: "We are hurrying to you."

The carpenter's mate comes in again saying: "Another foot fore and aft, sir," like he's saying it's a fine day or it ain't a fine day.

"D'y' 'spose anything 'll ever jar that guy?" says Whinners.

The next time the carpenter's mate comes in he says: "Twelve foot nine and eleven foot four, and bulkhead doors beginnin' to sag, sir."

"All right," says Mr. Nugent; and writes:

"May hold out another hour."

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"Hurry that!" he says to me and I do.

The answer comes back: "Thirty miles to go and driving her. Stick."

"Pass that around," says Mr. Nugent.

I do, and Bingo reads it saying: "You guys know what that drivin' means? It means her injins 're drummin', an' her old smoke-stacks roarin' an' a coupla foot o' white water rollin' acrost her deck, an' under the white water her deck plates bucklin' if ony a guy could see them! An' the skipper's on the bridge, an' many a watch I stood with him, and down the tube to the injin room I c'n hear him, an' he's sayin'—'She's doing fine—fine—but could you give her just a little more?' O, she's comin' all right—hurdlin' the low ones an' shootin' about half her length out over the top edges of the high ones, an' every look-out bustin' his eyes to pick us out in the dark. I dunno would I rather be on her or this one right now," says Bingo.

The carpenter's mate comes in and starts to say: "Thirteen foot——"

"You've sounded enough," says Mr. Nugent. "You did a good job too. Pass the word for everybody to come here."

"Aye, aye, sir."

"And you, Hiker, tell the radio operator to send out an S O S."

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"Aye, aye, sir," I says, like I'm a gob myself, and out I fly. And the radio man sends it, but the only answer we get is from our own little old destroyer.

"Twenty miles to go and giving her hell to reach you. Make signal lights," says our destroyer.

So Mr. Nugent says to turn on every deck light we got to Masters when he comes on deck, and Masters does, and they look fine—till all at once they go out. Every light goes out—like that! And the radio don't work, meaning the water's got to her what they call dynamos.

"Get ends of rope around deck or sheets out of the officers' rooms. Soak 'em in oil and make torches," says Mr. Nugent's voice in the dark; and they do it.

There was some what they call drums of oil on her boat deck. "Break out two of those drums," says Mr. Nugent, and they break them out.

"Let the oil leak out—plenty of it—over the lee side!"

They let it leak.

"Smash into the cargo and get all the wooden boxes and cases you can lay hands on. The bigger the better, and jump to it!"

They smash in and haul out boxes, jumping to it.

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"Soak 'em in oil. Pile a lot of 'em on that top deckhouse—and set fire to 'em."

They soak 'em 'n' pile 'em up 'n' set fire to 'em.

"There's a signal light she'll see!" says Masters when it's blazing up.

"Stand by your boat," says Mr. Nugent.

They stand by.

"Get in everybody—everybody but Masters and White—and don't forget your life vests." They grab life vests and get in—me too, when Mr. Nugent tells me. The ship's side makes a pretty good what they call a lee for the boat and the light from the signal fire is shining-like where the yoil is spread out over the water.

"Masters and you White, slack away the boat falls," says Mr. Nugent.

They slack away till the boat is in the water.

"Now White—and you Masters—drop in."

They're both of 'em standing under the light of the fire on the deck house, and we see Masters and then Bingo draw back from the boat falls.

"What are you waiting for?" says Mr. Nugent.

And Masters says: "Don't you go in the boat, sir?"

And when he does Mr. Nugent says: "Masters, you've been twenty-nine years in the service?"

"I have, sir," says Masters.

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"You have? And since when does a ship's commander go over the side before his men?"

Masters salutes and slides down one of the falls and Bingo down the other. They don't have far to slide—she's pretty low.

"Masters, you're in charge," calls Mr. Nugent from the deck. "But let White handle the tiller. Stick in the oil-slick, and keep her head to sea. And now cast clear your falls. I can feel her wallowing under me. Let that turret of hers lift up and over goes your boat. Cast clear and shove off."

"But, Mr. Nugent—" Masters starts to say.

"Sit down in the boat. I'm staying. Some one must keep the signal fire going. How are they to pick up a speck of a boat or a ship from out of the wide ocean after a seventy mile run on a black night without a light to guide them? Shove off—and be quick!"

"Aye, aye, sir," says Masters, and we shove off.

The sea out from the side of the ship is smooth-like 'count of the yoil from the drums spreading over it. There's high swells, and most straight up 'n' down the boat has to go to get over them, but the yoil keeps them from busting out into white water, and with Bingo steering her head on to wherever he sorta feels the rollers coming, we make away from the ship pretty good.

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We don't expect to have it that way too long. About all we're hoping is for the destroyer to find us before we capsize, and so we won't capsize too quick the carpenter's mate is tending to a coupla oil-bags with holes in them for letting out more oil from the bow as the boat moves along. He's a great guy that carpenter's mate. He don't ever open his mouth unless it's to say something, which is maybe why everybody takes notice when he do open his mouth. We ain't been five minutes away from the ship when he opens it. It's ony one word, but it's a mouthful.

"Searchlight!" he yells.

Searchlight! The next time the boat rides up on a swell we can all see it. Shining up on the clouds it is when we see it, but down we go and lose it. Atop of another swell we get another peek at it. Shining on the roaring seas it is, seas outside the slick with their boiling white tops all curling over like they're waiting to fall onto somebody—on us and the boat maybe if we get in their way. But we're sticking all we can to the oil slick.

The searchlight is coming on the jump, but when we think it's going to light on us it don't, because we're down in a hollow place again. It goes by us and on to the turret ship, and when it does we see where her bow is under water by the light

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of it. And from the bow to the stern the light is moving like it's trying to find us and can't.

We know Mr. Nugent's stood by the ship by the way the fire's been kept lighting, but now when we look we don't see him. The searchlight shows us the whole front half of the turret ship going under water while we're looking. The signal fire is near the stern, and the sea rushes up the sinking deck like going up the side of a house, and the fire settles right down into the water and—ss-st! no more fire. No sign there was ever one there, 'less some big boxes floating alongside empty is a sign. The stern of the ship goes next, kinda hanging in the air like it hates to go. Then under it goes. The last thing is her propeller sticking up. And we're looking at her propeller with the searchlight on it when we see a man standing straight up on a blade of it. Just before the propeller goes under he dives.

We don't see him come up. "He maybe kicked clear but I'm afraid he's gone!" says Masters.

"Smothered an' choked an' beat to death—that's what he'll be in that sea!" says Bingo.

"We shouldn't 've left the ship without him," says Masters.

"A coupla bums—that's what we are!" says Bingo. "We oughta grabbed him and throwed him in the boat, an' let 'em settle it by court

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martial whether we done right or wrong afterward."

The searchlight hops from where the ship was to the oil slick around us. It starts to one side, sweeps over the boat when we're low down, and sweeps back and when up we rise it comes Bing!—like a bull's eye into the boat, and we're still blinking in the eye of it when we hear our own captain's voice calling out: "I'll make a lee for the boat. Stand by then for our heaving lines!"

We can only see the destroyer like a shadow behind the searchlight, and the searchlight is jumping and rolling toward us. It works to wind'ard, and then a line comes whistling to one side of us, and whis-st!—one to the other side. Then one comes 'most cutting Whinners' eye out into the boat. We grab it. A coupla more come and we grab them and slip 'em over us, one after the yother, and step overboard and they haul us in. A tough haul. The last man aboard because he has to hold the boat head to sea is Bingo.

They sweep the seas then for Mr. Nugent. Everybody aboard is looking out for him. And bimeby two or three see him the same time. He's atop of a big wooden box, being throwed away up and then away down. They turn the destroyer quick to get near to him, and when they do she rolls the lowest I ever see a ship roll. They

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heave a line. And then three or four more lines, and two of 'em are pretty handy, but Mr. Nugent don't even reach for them.

Bingo's standing there, still with his life line on him. "He's all in," says Bingo, and goes over the side—not into any smooth oil-slicked spot, but among the rough babies with their boiling white tops all ready to curl over and grab whoever comes along. They fall onto Bingo and grab 'n' smash him good. To the top of one of 'em he goes and Swoosh-sh!—down and under he's slammed. Up he comes and there's another Swoosh! and down and under again he goes. And two more. There's gobs all lined up by our rail to go over after him, but before any more seas can get him he's got his fingers hooked into a crack in the box Mr. Nugent's hanging to, and what Bingo hooks his fingers into don't easy get away. The next line comes he grabs flying and makes it fast around Mr. Nugent, and about forty gobs haul 'em both aboard.

Mr. Nugent passes out—not dead, just all in—when he hits the deck.

The Exec leads Bingo into the ward room for the doctor to make sure he's all right. And Bingo is standing there with one arm around a stanchion so the ship's roll won't upset him. And while he's standing there all in like, we see him slip one hand

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up toward his left breast, and feel around inside his life vest—like he's trying to grab something; and then he goes scared looking, and out comes his hand with his fingers all clinched.

"His heart!" says the doctor, and jumps for him, and the Exec jumps too.

"Lookit!" says Bingo, his voice 'most all gone and loosening his fingers. "Lookit, sir! Me last pack o' cigarettes, and they all soaked!" And he kinda sidesteps up to the Exec, saying: "Yuh haven't got a spare dry one, have yuh, sir?" says Bingo.

Next morning Bingo's around deck looking pretty fine, and the Exec flags him, saying: "White, did you think of your girl at all when you went over after Mr. Nugent last night?"

"O yes, sir," says Bingo. "And after I'd been hoisted a coupla times to the sky by those high roller boys, I find myself thinking: 'Well, do I get away with this or don't I?' and thinking of her."

"Suppose you hadn't got away with it?"

"If I hadn't, sir? Well, she's a great one for wantin' to get letters about anything happens over here, and if I hadn't got away with it—why sir, she'd be out a coupla pages o' good readin'!"

Bimeby old Masters comes along, and the Exec don't have to fan him to start him up. He drifts

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in himself, saying: "You were speakin' yesterday morning, sir, of the chances men take—or they don't take—on account of some woman or other. Well, sir, there was a wife I had and I've seen the time when I think I could've been almost a hero—led one of those forlorn hopes almost, and why? Why, for no more than to hope to live through it and come back to her arms a hero, yes sir, and reward enough that would be for me."

"Which one was that?" ast the Exec.

"The first wife, sir. I was young then and she was younger. But she died. And not so young nor so innocent, the next one. And I saw the time with her when I think I would take the same chances and why? Why, for no more than to be brought back to her arms a corpse—that's all the reward I'd ask—to give her something to worry over for the rest of her life. Though I know now it would take more than that to worry her."

"As for the one I got now! 'I'm your pay envelope an' that's all you care for me,' was what I said to her leaving home! And when we're in that little boat last night wondering how long we all had to live, I said to myself: 'If I go now she will get a fine pension out of it.' But by an' by it came to me that after all there might be a word or two to say that I never thought of for her side

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of it. And thinkin' that I said: 'Good luck to you! and whatever pension you get out of this night's work!'"

All this time Mr. Nugent's been sleeping in about the only place in the ship they hadn't stowed some shipwrecked guy in—on the chart room transom—and bimeby he wakes up and when he does and rolls his face inboard, he says to the Exec: "Hi there! what time you going to get us into port?"

And the Exec has a peek at his chart and says: "Oh, not so long now. But say, Nujie, what were you thinking of when you were bouncing around on that dry goods box or whatever it was last night?"

"I guess I was too busy hanging on to be thinking of anything else," says Mr. Nugent.

"What! You never thought of the wife?"

"Oh, sure, but that's not thinking—to have her in mind. But you know there's been talk of not allowing the wives of officers to stay on this side with us? Well, when I saw that fine, big ship going down under me, when I realized that she was surely gone, I said to myself: If I could only have brought you into port perhaps those indoor admirals who are running the show mightn't be in a hurry to send Margie back home when they find out where she is. But never mind that

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now and listen. Take a short cut home, will you? And look! I'd like to be having an eye out for a towel waving from a window on the hill—call me ten minutes before we hit that barrage, will you?" And the Exec says all right and Mr. Nugent rolls his face outward and goes off to sleep again.

The Exec keeps working away on his chart, but looking like he's thinking of more than where the ship is. Bimeby he steps over and has a peek through the forward air-port and comes back saying: "What do you think, Hiker, of men like Lieutenant Nugent and your friend Bingo and old man Masters falling for women and girls as easy as they do?"

"What do I know 'bout wimmin 'n' girls?" I says. "But if it don't make 'em lay off their job, why not?"

And bimeby he says: "That's so, why not?" Then he has another peek through the air-port an' comes back, saying: "The barrage ahead—call Mr. Nugent."

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THIS craft (this is Bill) we bumped into out the fog looked to be a hundred years old, and half that time it must have been since she'd had a cleaning up or a coat of paint. She smelled of coats and coats of tar outside, and from inside of her when we climbed aboard came some more fine smells.

She was a fishing smack, the *Venus*, and her skipper was a short, stout-built party in a navy-blue jersey with a black, oily silk handkerchief tucked into the neck of it; and he had oily-looking trousers tucked into short, black, oily-looking jack-boots, and he had black oily-looking hair sticking out from under the edges of his flat black cap, and a stiff black whisker sticking out from his jaw, and between the cap and the jaw was a bold nose and bold eyes. A bold-looking man altogether, he was.

I'm wondering where he's going to stow us. Lefty and me—we're tough enough, but Mr. Rush isn't feeling too lively and worrying about what's happened his niece besides; but there's a ladder leading down into a dark-looking place aft, and I

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look at it and then at the skipper and he gets what I mean, and leads the way down the ladder.

When we're below, Mr. Rush has a peek all around, saying: "Like unto the Ark of Scripture she is, pitched within and without."

"Yeah," I thinks; "and if this place is a sample she is also like unto the Scriptural Ark in being cut up into little rooms."

The little room was the cabin, and to both sides of it were bunks and every bunk closed in except for a little square hole to crawl in by. And jammed in wherever there was a spot or a place to hang or dump a thing at all was all the wearing stuff they owned except what they had on them, I guess—oil slickers, sou'westers, sea boots, jerseys, storm coats, and the like of that. And mixed in and around with them was all the spare gear of the vessel, it looked like—blocks, ropes-ends, reefing tackle and so on. And sticking up through the middle of the floor was the butt of a mizzenmast. And built into the forward bulkhead was a fireplace with some coals still showing signs of life, and atop of the live coals was a frying pan with some grease smoking itself to death in it, and through a busted plank in the bulkhead was coming the smell of pickled herring. And there was a nother fine smell—bilge water.

"Stuffy, isn't it?" whispers Mr. Rush, "and

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rather dark in there?" meaning the bunk the skipper points out to him to roll into if he's tired, and I says: "Yeah, stuffy an' dark both, but it's got a little somethin' on a nopen boat in the middle o' the yocean and nothin' to eat and nowhere special to go."

"Oh, I'm not finding fault," says Mr. Rush. "Don't take me too literally. I'm always making mental notes for future reference." And shoves the little bag that he's never let go of through the hole into the bunk, and after he's got the bag planted safe inside he shoves in his head after the bag, and squeezes in his shoulders after his head, and then wiggles 'n' kicks in his back and légs and his feet. More words come from him when he's safe inside the bunk, but by and by he's quiet.

Below the bunks each side is a locker sticking out and Lefty and me and the skipper are sitting on one of them when down comes an old scout who's a twin to the skipper in looks. By way of letting us know who he is the skipper opens up with:

"Nine an' twenty year us ha' sailed t'gither, an' nine an' twenty year mair us 'll sail, shan't us, Auld Jim?"

"Aye, Frankie lad, an' Lord pleases to keep us off bottom," says Auld Jim.

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"O aye, an' Lord pleases," says the skipper; and they go on like that with Lefty 'n' me straining our ears to get what they're saying, and arguing are they some kind of Scotchmen, which is what I think, or are they some kind of English like a Yorkshireman, which is what Lefty thinks. We don't agree but I say: "Anyway they're Allies—so let 'em jaw. I wonder when do we eat?"

Maybe we look what we're thinking, or maybe it's their way of doing things without hurrying, but by and by a big kind of a fat, big fuhla they call Jarge comes down and digs some soft coal out from inside one of the lockers and heaves it onto the half dead fire in the grate, and then he chucks some fresh grease into the frying pan, and pretty soon the soft coal is smoking fine and the grease is smoking fine, and the smell of old pickled herring is coming in waves through the busted bulkhead. And there is a fine smell of bilge water too.

"Forty years, I'll bet, since her bilge's been pumped out," I whispers to Lefty.

"I was just thinkin' a hundred," says Lefty.

We hear some gurgling sounds coming from the bunk where Mr. Rush is stowed away, and the skipper begins to worry about the gentleman—is he sick?

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"Sick no," says Lefty. "He's ony makin' more mental notes."

Jarge and Auld Jim have oil-smocks to their knees which now they throw off to get more action for their cooking, and they get some plates and cups and saucers and spread them around where they can find any square inch of space, which means there's a traffic jam on the floor, with all of us having to be careful where we plant our feet. Then they haul out each of them tin boxes from their bunks and take out some bread.

"An' noo us 'll ha' bit o' fried whitin', a rare bit," says the skipper. And the whiting was all right when it came, and so was the bread and tea, ony when Lefty was to England on his last trip tea was pretty scarce, and he wants to know where they grabbed off theirs.

And they tell us how there'd been a fine big ship torpedoed inshore and how before the crown agents could reach her the patrols and fishermen handy helped themselves to a few tid-bits—tea, bacon, sugar, butter, and so on.

Auld Jim heaves some more soft coal onto the fire and when he does the place begins to fill up with smoke, meaning the draft is being monkeyed with somewheres.

"It'll be foot o' the big sail jibin' an' knockin' ower the stove pipe onto deck, iss," says Auld

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Jim, and tells Jarge who's nearest the ladder to yell to a boy Howie who is standing by the tiller to put the stove pipe back on, which Jarge does, and then looking like a guy who thinks he ought to have some reward for himself, he lifts a bottle of Scotch out of his tin box and pours himself out about four fingers of it into his tea cup. "For ma appetite," he says to Lefty and me and throws it into himself and puts the bottle back in the box.

"Jarge is teetotal, ar'nt 'ee, Jarge?" says the skipper.

"O aye," says Jarge.

"Dijjer hear the big loafer?" whispers Lefty, and busts out to Jarge with: "Where're you a teetotaller after that wallop o' booze yuh just hove down yer throat?"

"Aw'm teetotal on ale," says Jarge. "Pubs sell ale, an' ar' n't been in pub for twenty year."

"An' us ar'nt been away from pub for twenty hours ashoor, ha' us, Auld Jim?" says the skipper.

"Francis, Francis, and thou Jim, think o' th' poonds thee'd ha' in bank if thee stayed clear o' pubs!" says Jarge.

"Hoo mony poonds have 'ee in bank, Jarge?" says Jim.

"Why, th' ootrageous roysterer," says Jarge, "ha'nt aw reared a moost expansive family? Aw

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'm 'shamed o' thee baith. An' thou wonders, Francis, th' boy Howie smooks cigaretts. 'Th' sins o' the faither,' says Bible, 'mun be veesited on children,' iss."

"What do Bible say about tha greedy sins 'o' they as make fast to teakittle? If th'art done preachin', tha great hulk, will 'ee cast loose th' teakittle?" yells Auld Jim.

"Aw forgot teakittle," says the big guy and passes it over, and the skipper pours Lefty and me another hot cup of it, and we turn in on the lockers for a snooze.

When I come awake next time it's four o'clock, meaning the afternoon, by the smoked-up little clock that's nailed to the bulkhead. I go up on deck where the fog is gone and the crew are getting ready to fish. The skipper is at the tiller nursing the vessel's headway, while Jarge is paying out a baited trawl line to leeward. Whenever the old smack moves too fast Jarge holds up his hand and the skipper luffs and checks her. When Jarge wants her to come a little faster he holds up his hand and the skipper eases her off again. Whatever the skipper's doing, when Jarge holds up his hand he does the other thing.

Lefty is on deck before me. "I been watching for the last coupla hours," says Lefty. "A gang of our bank fishermen 'd have their trawls hove

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out an' hauled again while these guys been gettin' ready."

"Maybe they would," I says. "But people in old countries don't rush theirselves to death same's we do. I think they're doin' pretty well to be out here if they never fished a tall, with the U-boats working the way they been doin'."

"Maybe that's so too," says Lefty.

Auld Jim is feeding the baited line to Jarge and the boy Howie is helping Jim by every once in a while lashing a black-tarred sheep's bladder onto the long line for a buoy.

When it comes supper time I call Mr. Rush, and "P-yeu!" he says, meaning the smells I suppose, or maybe it's the sweat rolling in drops off his brow.

The skipper spears something that's been frying in the pan, saying: "Rare bit for 'ee," to Mr. Rush. "Pulled 'im off hook to save special for 'ee. Fat he war an' shinin' like new shillin' i' th' sun."

"Fish is it?" says Mr. Rush.

"O aye"—the skipper holds it up on the end of a fork. "An' Auld Frank cuts 'im oop an' us towed 'im astarn for ten hours, iss."

"I never cared much for fish," whispers Mr. Rush.

"A bit o' skate—lovely, fat skate," says the skipper.

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"Skate?" says Mr. Rush kind of weak-like, meaning he'd as soon eat a dog as a skate. But he's game. "Thank you," he says, "that was very nice of you."

"Very nice, very nice," he's still saying and eating it when up the ladder he goes on the run. Lefty and me go after him. And Lefty holds up one side of his head and me the other while he heaves up what he tried to eat of the skate, and whatever else been in his stomach for the last week or so, I guess.

Mr. Rush comes below and they get busy making him some toast. And a fine job it was to keep it jumping on the short forks from one hand to the other with their knuckles scorching. Good men—that's what they were; and Mr. Rush hangs onto the toast and a cup of tea when he gets it down and wiggles into his bunk again.

They go up on deck again, where they lift out about ten feet of her rail amidships and they take a heavy clinker-built boat they call a cobble, Lefty and me helping, and when the sea heaves up we all shove her bow out till the chop gets it and with Howie in her bow and Jim in her waist the rest of us give her the shove overboard with big Jarge hanging on like he didn't know was he inboard or outboard over her stern.

They begin to haul in their lines, Jarge doing the hauling over a roller on the quarter gunnel

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of the cobble. Jim dressing them and the boy Howie with a pair of oars keeping her head to the tide.

If only there wasn't a great war going on somewhere, it would look like the quiet life and suit Lefty and me fine, and when they're back aboard I asked them did the U-boats ever come near them; and when I did the boy Howie spoke up saying: "They come near enough one time, didn't they faither?" And faither said: "O aye." And Jim and Jarge spoke up and said: "O aye, near enou."

Howie's language isn't so straining to our ears and brain as the talk of the others, and so I ask him what's the rest of the story, and he tells us how earlier in the war when they didn't rate the U-boats so high, one of them breaks water right among the fishing fleet, the *Venus* being one, and rounds up fourteen smacks. And the crews of thirteen he puts aboard the *Venus* and tells her to hurry home.

"An' bombin' and sinkin' the poor little smacks they was—a sad sight as we're sailin' off," says Howie.

"She came again, on our very next voyage out, the same U-boat, with the same captain and runs alongside us and helps himself to a mess o' fish. 'I have no English money with me to-day, but I

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will be back to pay you later,' he says—in good English as ever I've hear he says it. And he comes back two days later, runs alongside and heaves a little bag onto our deck, and he says: 'There's for the fish.' And when faither opened the bag there's the pay in bright English silver for what fish he took."

"Why d'y' s'pose he didn't sink yuh?" says Lefty.

"Who knows?" says Howie. "But seemed to me he liked faither's and Uncle Jarge and Auld Jim's looks—friendly like he was.

"We made fun o' the U-boats one time," says Howie, "but we learned better."

"Aye," says Auld Jim. "Bold men, bold craft, they be."

"Wicked men," says Jarge, and then like he's meditating—"but paid fair market price, iss, for oor fish."

"An' what 're your people doin' to get that fuhla?" I asked.

"Oh, there be ways," says Howie, and next day along comes a smack with brick red sails, wide bow and stern, and a sliding bowsprit, a sister ship to the *Venus* in looks, and I says so to the skipper.

"Ootside iss, but inside nae," says the skipper. She came alongside and Mr. Rush telling them

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who he is and having the papers to prove it, they talk to him and by and by let us all go aboard her. She's yawl-rigged, same as the *Venus* to sail, but she has an engine to drive her when there's no wind. She had what looked like a regular fishing crew with fishing gear—cobble and all, but her fishing crew turned out to be a special Royal Navy gun crew, and when they threw off her hatches instead of a hold for fish there was a fine young three-inch disappearing gun. All kinds of strange gadgets she had. What looked like an oil lamp in her cabin was an electric light when we tried it; and radio wires ran up through the middle of her halyards and she carried a wireless, though we couldn't see any wireless gear to show for it aloft.

She was what they call a mystery ship, and her job was to stick around near old smacks like the *Venus* hoping that maybe another U-boat or the same one would pop up and pass the time of day, or come alongside and help herself to a mess of fish. And if one did——!

Lefty and me would like to 've stayed aboard her, but nothing doing on that; and so all we could do for the next three days was to watch her loafing around. We didn't see her do anything to any U-boats, but one day she sends out a radio for Mr. Rush and by and by gets an answer that some

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of the horse-boat's people were picked up, a young woman among them, meaning of course that his niece was safe.

That same evening the *Venus* is ready to leave for port, and when she is Lefty turns in and so does Mr. Rush. But I don't want to go to sleep; and when Jarge comes up for his watch I stay up on deck with him; and Jarge takes the tiller and looks over the quarter saying:

"She'll be daein' sax knots for herself noo, aw 'm thinkin';" says Jarge, looking up at the sails and all around; and everything looking all right he fills his pipe.

"She do move gentle-like, th' auld smack, in a breeze o' this kind," says Jarge. "But in a blaw she's aye wuss nor ony steam trawler, O aye." And looks after the smoke he's puffing from his pipe to see can he see where the little breeze is taking it. He can't see and so he takes notice of the course.

"'Alf p'int nearer th' wind 'll be better. West quowter soothe, nae—but west quowter nowthe, iss," he says when he's studied that out, and shifts her course the half point. Next, he has a peek at the trim of the sails; and has to say a word about them: "Francis is aye ower loose wi' sheets. Francis is aye ower loose wi' mony things—wi' his money an' his baccy an' his ale

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ashoor. It be chaktereestic o' Francis to sail wi' free sheet, iss. Aw mun tak' in sheets," and he takes the sheets in, me helping.

It was a quiet night with a quiet tide rippling past our quarter and quiet little eddies bubbling in our wake. It was the kind of a night that men show themselves friendly-like and tell what's inside of them if there's any sympathetic party standing by to listen; and sitting on his bait boxes beside the tiller, and with eyes shifting from his compass to his sails, and not forgetting any time to keep his pipe going—sitting and looking so Jarge begins to talk:

"Aw was yince a wild young blade like Francis ma'sel', iss. Five pund, aye an' five guineas like any steam trawler master for suit o' clothes. But aw took releegion an' marrit t'gither. Don't allus gae t'gither, nae, but aw did, an' aw been deefereent mon since, iss."

He has a lot more to say about the missis. It was the missis knitted the fine guernseys and the grand underwear he had on. I had to feel of them to see how grand they were. No goods like 'em in the shops, nae. And he was sure right in that.

"The missis," says Jarge, "allus ready agin ma return. An' hoo her do look arter the bairns! On Soondays when aw 'm to hame—aw n't ben

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hame for two months noo—th' tarrible war it be!—but please Lord aw 'll be hame this night fortnight, iss. But on Soondays when we strolls int' th' country wi' th' bairns, th' missis an' mysel', 'tis gran'! There's th' hedges by th' roadside, th' medders, th' coos, th' hills wi' th' sun on 'em, th' little brooks—tha couldst no eemagine it, an' th' smell o' it all—O but it's rare, rare—an' coomin' hame i' th' evenin' wi' th' church bells! O gran', gran' it be on Soonday evenin', iss. An' this verra moment th' verra same bells will be chimin' in oor place. If so be 'twas ma smack this old hulk under us—do th' knaw what aw 'd dae? Aw'd put her straight for hame, iss. An' by t'morry night at latest aw'd be hame wi' th' missis an' th' bairns playin' by th' door. There's nowt else like it—th' bairns an' th' missis by th' door on Soonday evenin' and the bairns climbin' ower me an' pullin' th' beard o' me, an' me smookin' pipe. An' th' neighbor's stoop wi' his missis an' his bairns ower the way, iss."

He has a peek around the sea and by and by he's going again: "Look at yan moon! See her ower th' jib when th' auld smack dips? What think th' bairns say about th' moon? Missis towld 'em yince, puir bairns, an' they niver forgot, nae. 'Whatever becomes o' th' moon

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when us sees nowt o' it—when it gaes awa', mither?' An' the missis says: 'They cut it into little shiny stars!' Aye, th' missis tells 'em an' th' bairns, an' the puir, puir bairns believes, iss. Same moon yan. Soonday night this an' maybe her's tellin' 'em summat like it this verra minute.

"The bairns an' missis—'tis they haulds us to th' fishin' in th' gale an' cauld. 'Tis tarrible war noo an' no gaein' far off-shoor, nae. But afore th' war—ah-h! th' black nights aw feared for th' bairns an' missis! Th' Octowber night when three an' thirty men o' Fylie never coomed hame! Aw was acquainted wi' fower an' twenty o' them masel'—fower an' twenty men o' Fylie aw knawed masel' an' gone to bottom in single gale, iss. Francis an' Auld Jim be twa gran' hands for a' their free ways when it cooms t' blaw, an' three on us an' twa men o' Wisby war on Dogger Bank in auld *Venus* that night—an' for three nights arter. Wind an' sea—frightful, frightful! Na dry bread or hot tea did us see for fower days an' fower nights, nae. Wet clothes, wet cabin, aye, th' beds in oor verra bunks wet—an' three an' thirty gade men oot o' Fylie garn when us coomed hame. Aw tell 'ee on night like this—fine an' starry an' fine moon—men should na forget th' bad nights. Na sayin' when oor time 'll coom—nae."

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And listening to him I said to myself: "You fat loafer, you helped yourself from a quart of Scotch and never asked the rest of us had we a mouth on us! But let that go—you're all right at that."

And then Jarge has a peek into the cabin at the clock and pretty soon he calls Auld Jim and Jim comes up and takes the tiller from Jarge. And the next thing Jim does is to heave the bait boxes into the waist and next to take a peek at the compass.

"West an' quowter sooth she be," says Jarge.

"An' why west an' quowter sooth?" says Jim.

"Ma joodgment."

"Tha joodgment? Thou 'rt th' leader amang us in releegion but leave th' sailin' o' th' auld *Venus* t' Auld Frank an' tha hope o' heaven will be gude as noo an' the missis maybe na so like some day t' die a widdy! Tha joodgment! Tak' tha joodgment to bed with 'ee, will 'ee?"

And Jarge does, I guess. Anyway he goes below.

"West an' quowter south, nae, but west an' quowter nowthe, iss." And back to her old course he puts the smack. "Save th' verra wind will Jarge. A gude man is Jarge but savin' all for th' missis an' family. Get marrit, get marrit, Jarge is allus sayin' t' me. 'An' arter that—what will 'ee promise arter that?' aw say. Jarge

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says nowt. But Francis ben marrit an' what do Francis say? 'Get marrit if th' feels that way, but mind 'ee this,' says Francis: 'mind 'ee, Auld Jim, tha 'll never agen hae th' oon way.'"

And standing with one hand curved around the tiller handle and the other hand stuck up under his jersey, Auld Jim stamps his boot-heels on the deck and his sou'wester bobbing up and down while he stands, he whistles to leeward and begins to sing little too-roo-roo and too-roo-rays songs to himself.

But it was too fine a night. Auld Jim has to quit the too-roo-roo lullabies and bust into a real song, singing easy at first, but strong at the end.

"An' she sets out yince mair to cry,
An' I yince mair do kiss good-by—
'Goodby, goodby, an' mind 'ee, sweet,
While aw'm awye wi tha Nowthe Sea fleet!"

An' aw kissed my lass, a Fylie lass,
Aw kissed my lass a sweet good by,"

winds up Auld Jim.

The skipper butts his shoulders above the cabin companionway. "Lasses an' kisses—rare song that!" says the skipper and has a whiff then of the air. "It be comin' t' breeze, Auld Jim?"

"Aye, wind in plenty afore th' auld *Venus* butts her nose past light-ship," says Auld Jim.

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“Gude! Get ’ee below, Jim, an’ ha’ mug o’ tea arter th’ watch an’ bit o’ sleep agen th’ day t’ come.”

And Jim goes below, me with him, and we have a fine cup of tea, and Jim turns in and I go up on deck again where the skipper is peeking up at the sails and saying:

“Aw shan’t ask ’ee did Auld Jim hae owt t’ do with sheets because aw knaws. Sheets might be free as wind or close as paint for a’ Auld Jim cares. But Jarge! Teetotaller is Jarge, savin’ of ale, iss, an’ savin’ o’ th’ wind too—savin’ of all things, iss. There be no abidin’ some o’ Jarge close-hauled notions. Will tha pay oot a bit mair sheet—a bit mair—main an’ mizzen mair, aye. Thank ’ee, thank ’ee, an’ dom Jarge an’ all close-hauled notions.”

It is still a pretty fine sort of a night, but not so mild as it was. The moon is still there, but coming and going now behind clumps of clouds. The breeze is freshening and a cross-sea is beginning to slap little splashes of spray aboard. The skipper stands just as Jim stood, one hand curved around the handle of the tiller, the other stuck up inside his jersey, and his eyes roaming for what’s going on around and above him.

By and by on the clouds away ahead of us, I see the loom of a light. A great signal light ashore,

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the skipper said it was, and a long road to go yet. And so it was; but the wind was beginning to whistle a little through our top gear; and the cross sea was jumping and diving her a little, and to every jump and dive she's splashing more and more spray over her low rail.

Auld skipper stands there with eyes for whatever the sky and sea and air may be holding for him, and is there any job on earth where a man comes nearer being the whole works than the man who stands to the wheel of a sailing vessel at sea? And men who've been standing watches most of their lives to the wheel of sailing vessels—all that ever I met are great fuhlas. And this old North Sea fisherman was a great fuhla.

I asked him did it worry him ever—the thought of the U-boats?

"I tak' mair thought than aw relish o' U-boats," he says.

"Then why do you stick to this fishin'?" I says.

"Shore folk mu' hae their fish an' who's to get th' fish if th' like o' us smacksmen doon't?" he says.

It was coming on to dawn then, and a dawn full of color after a night watch at sea—it's a wonderful sight. The sun pokes his top rim above the ocean's edge and a beam of light all gold comes shining over our quarter rail.

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“Gran’ sun astern arn’t it?” says the skipper. “Red like fire i’ th’ cabin grate on a cauld night, iss, but th’ sky clear an’ a’ blue as sky should be. Wind aye, an’ mair comin’, but glor’ous, glor’ous. Tak’ in log, will ’ee, an’ see what says?”

Nine and a half knots-she showed for the last hour, which was stepping some for her old legs, but the skipper said he saw her do eleven knots once, and it was not for me to call him a liar, no more than a young father talking of his baby, but it must have been a gale of wind and a smooth sea when the old *Venus* did eleven knots. But a good old packet she was, and taking us to port after a time when some of us doubted would we ever see port again, and whatever craft it is does that, you just got to feel a little warm towards her.

“She’s an old wonder,” I says to the skipper, the both of us watching her. The wind by then was blowing most half a gale, but no mean-acting half a gale. Pleasant and summer-like it was, with the wind almost like a kiss when it went flying by a fuhla’s cheeks; but piling up the little seas it surely was, and after piling them up it was driving ’em aboard, and coming aboard they splashed the smack from the tip of her sliding bowsprit to the end of her mizzen boom: every inch of her they soaked in the old brine, rolling it off the hatch combings and the high rails to where her old deck

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planks were worn and hollowed out, where they stayed—the only place aboard they stayed—and made little pools that lay shining in the morning sun.

But no harm in them. Let all the high-shouldered, white-collared young sea gents in the ocean come aboard if they wanted to! Which I guess they did want to—climbing up and hanging onto and pulling down the foot of her main-sail and splashing into the bottom of the cobble till it was deep enough there for me to wash my feet in—if I wanted to, which I didn't. I was tired getting my feet wet. And they soaked me higher than my feet, and they soaked the skipper—soaked him good because he couldn't duck away from the tiller, and over the rail behind him they made little rainbows that came and went like moving pictures.

"She do rowl, th' auld *Venus*, doon't she?" says the skipper. "But it suits her rare, aye. An' a gude trip vy'age, aye."

"Gude vy'age, iss," says Jarge, who's just then coming up the cabin ladder. "Sax an' a score o' boxes whitin's an' a score boxes 'addicks in hold. An' two score fine cod on ice. An' there be sole an' plaice an' th' miscellan'ous."

"Do you make more than before the war?" I says.

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"Think 'ee us 'd gae oot there on auld market?" says Jarge indignant-like. "Nae, nae—war times, war market!"

"But a tough thing, the war," I says.

"O aye, most evil thing war. But war hae its compensations. Aye, its compensations."

The skipper butts in to point to a low line on the horizon, meaning it is land ahead. And it looked good to me, and to Lefty and Mr. Rush when I call "Land O!" and they come running up on deck.

Mr. Rush makes a speech on the feelings of a man who is seeing land for the first time after a perilous cruise, but nobody's listening because we're all the rest of us watching a bunch of mine sweepers and patrols steaming back and forth.

"Those fuhlas in there," I says to Mr. Rush busting in on his speech—"those fuhlas hookin' into those mines, and these fishing fuhlas aboard out here—how about them for doing their share of winning the war?"

Which makes Mr. Rush say to the skipper that of course they have their medals to show for their work, and the skipper looking at him astonished like says what for would they be getting medals?

"Why you are heroes too—why not?"

"Heroes? Us? Gie ower tha foolin'! Us

Hiker Joy

shoot no big guns, nor wear uniform, hoo can us be heroes?" says the skipper.

We run inside the mine sweepers and patrols with great greetings along the line, and past a light-ship where the skipper steers the *Venus* close enough for Lefty who's leaning out from the fore-rigging to slap his cap across the light-ship's stern as we go diving by, which means the skipper is feeling pretty good.

A row of corks is floating on the water outside the harbor, meaning there's a net barrage under them, and through the barrage we go, after some official guys look us over, and then in and up to a big dock where a lot of old timers begin to sing out to our smacksmen, What ho! and What cheer! Auld Jim, or Skipper or Jarge, whoever it is, and What ho! and What cheer! our fuhlas hail back to them.

Jarge must be the purser of the smack, for we're no sooner tied to the dock than up he goes and when he comes back he says: "Fower an' fowerty shillin's for whitin's an' gude price for 'addicks," and goes on to reckon up what they will make. "A gran' v'yage," says Jarge. "Twelve pund apiece us 'll hae to send hame. Most evil thing is war, but it has its compensations, iss."

Then he goes off to some quiet hiding place to write a line to the missis, and Mr. Rush goes

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off to hear more of his niece. The rest of us go on to a pub where is one of the longest bars I ever see and I'm all set to buy a few rounds when I spot a sign on the wall: Treating Not Allowed!—the same over a lot of print saying how it's a violation of the Defense of the Realm or some other War Act to treat anybody to a drink; and I'm 'most discouraged till Jim points out another sign on the wall almost alongside, and this other sign is in bigger and blacker letters, and it reads:—ALoud? So we have at the main business of the day, which is to say farewell to each other with the usual fitting ceremonies.

And behind the bar when we march up to it abreast are eight husky bar maids and it was a joy to see them work. After about six rounds, Auld Jim leans over and whispers: "Thee'll be a Fylie lass?" to the one nearest him. And she must 've said iss she was, because Auld Jim smiles and says: "'Aw knawed a Fylie lass yince—Ah-h!" and starts in to sing:

"Aw kissed ma lass an' aw said Good-bye,
Aw kissed her fair—Good-bye, Good-bye!
An' says—'Sweetheart, aw 'm garn awye,'
Aw says to her—'Good-bye, Good-bye!'

She cried on ma breast while aw hove to—
'Whatever,' says she, 'is a lass to do
When her lad's awye? Aw 've nowt but 'oo!
An' aw 've no ither lad but 'oo!'

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An' she yince mair begins to cry,
An' aw yince mair do kiss good-bye—
'Good-bye, Good-bye, an' mind 'ee Sweet,
While aw 'm awye wi' tha Nowthe Sea fleet!'

An' aw kissed ma lass, a Fylie lass,
Aw kissed ma lass a sweet Good-bye,"

sings Auld Jim.

"Ah-h," says the skipper—"lasses an' kisses—a rare song that! Gie it t' we yince mair, Auld Jim!"

But Jarge is out at the door yelling to them for a couple of ootrageous roysterers and have they no thought of their cargo of fish and the buyers on the dock waiting?

And so after one last one we parted.

"Great fuhlas," I said to Mr. Rush when we met at the hotel. "Let 'em live three or four hundred years ago and Drake or Hawkins, or some other chartered pirate 'd been grabbin' them on sight an' sendin' them to lead a boardin' party in their first sea fight."

"Yes," says Mr. Rush. "Great men in their way. But the breed is dying—not many left these days."

And then he goes on to tell how he's got word from his niece. She's safe but married. "Married already!—to a Lieutenant Nugent of our navy, and they're living at a naval base down the coast!"

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"Nugent? It's kinda sudden, but she's married to a reg'lar guy," I told him. "Don't yuh think we oughta hustle along an' visit 'em?"

And we do.

London Lights

THIS is me, Hiker, talking again.

After I call Mr. Nugent and he goes bouncing out on deck, I go out and have a look. It's land all right. All I been seeing for a month is the yocean and the sky, but here's the greeniest grass, and trees, and there's houses rising up on the side of a hill-like—no 47-story ones like in little old New York, but houses I could see had people living in 'em by the smoke coming out the chimneys—no black smudgy steamer smoke coming out in puffs-like, but reg'lar smoke floating up in blue curly-gigs and saying plain: "Gotta be gettin' ready a bite to eat—the old man'll be home soon."

"If I was ony back in Brooklyn!" I say, and then give myself the laugh, for s'posing I was back there, where'd be anybody waiting for me to come home?

We come steaming up to what they call the barrage, and they let us through, and then we go on up to what they call moorings, and Mr. Nugent speaks to the captain, who smiles and says: "Go ahead—beat it!" and away goes Mr. Nugent in the motor dory to see his wife.

London Lights

Seeing him go makes me want to go ashore and have a run around too, but being what they call an alien and having no passport, I can't go till what they call the yauthorities look me over, which they do next morning. The Exec takes me to where a guy in yuniform with a lot of papers and a bottle of ink and holding a pen in the yair asts me where I'm born and how old am I, and what do I do for a living, and am I married or single, and I say: "Married or single? Take a peek at me 'n' my age and lay off the foolish questions, will yuh?" And he says do I know who I'm talking to, and I say no I don't and who is it?

He stands up, I dunno why, 'less it's so he can whang his fist down harder on the table, and says: "Arnswer the questions as I put them, or take the consequences!"

"Slip 'em to me, whatever they are, if yuh got any more foolish questions like that," I says, and when I do he calls in another guy and they're gettin' ready to hang me or something, when I look up and standing in the doorway is a party that ony for a lot o' new clothes and lookin' like he's lately had a hot bath and a shave and hair-cut, I'd say was Bill Green.

I take another look and it is Bill, and he has another peek at me and—"I heard you were here.

Hiker Joy

An' now, you pigeon-toed little rabbit, where you been all this time, and how're yuh feelin'?" he says.

"I been a lotta places an' I'm feelin' great," I says, "ony here's a coupla foolish guys asking questions."

Bill squares me easy with the two guys, because he's secret service and they're ony police, and I tell them my wife's mother ain't got any maiden name and a few more things like that, and then Bill and me head back for the ship, but we don't go aboard, because all the gobs 'n' officers are standing stiff up like they got a shock, and when we move closer to see what's doing, a gob goes "S-s-st!" to us, and we see a guy in a swell uniform coming down what they call the gangway.

"This must be that King I yused to read about," I think.

But it ain't. It's a nadmiral, and there's a movie man with him. "Now Admiral, you're pacing the deck of your ship," the movie man is saying, "and the yenemy fleet is somewhere off in the offin'. Very well. Now, walk a few paces that way and a few paces this way, please."

The admiral begins to pace, but he ain't paced far when the movie man is saying: "Not so fast, Admiral, not so fast. Try it again—sl-o-o-w."

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The admiral tries it again, stepping along this time like one o' those pall-bearers to a funeral, ony his head up 'stead of down, and he has to hold his knees stiff to make it a slow walk.

"That's it, that's it! And now, the look-out reports that the enemy is in sight. You grab your glasses—where's your glasses?"

"Here," says the admiral.

"No, no, no," says the movie man, "not that kind! Those look too much like opera glasses and the public's been trained to those long spy-glass what-do-you-call-'ems—telescopes. Ain't yuh got a telescope anywheres around?"

The admiral sends three or four officers off and bimeby they come back with a telescope, which the admiral is putting up to his eye when the movie man says: "Not yet, Admiral, not yet. You're still pacing the deck, and the spy-glass is tucked under your arm, but you're meditating deeply. Slow, sl-o-o-w, remember—that's it," and he turns the handle a few times.

"And now an officer rushes up to you saying the enemy is closing in, four points off to—starboard is it? You grab your spy-glass, rush to the rail and have a look—a long, hard look. See—so: Now let's try that."

The admiral has to do it four or five times before the movie man shoots it, and all the time

Hiker Joy

he's shooting it he's saying how it's going to be shown before seven or eight hundred million people in thirty or forty thousand movie houses in the next coupla months.

There's more movie stuff, but Bill and me got enough. We go back up town and Bill says: "Some good dope in that belt o' yours, Hiker, about a gang workin' here in London. Mr. Nugent's on his way to London already and we're goin' to-night. And now you'll maybe have to meet gen'ral's 'n' kings 'n' head porters, so come on now and you get some clothes."

"The best yuh got for this boy," says Bill to the man in the store, and out comes a suit with a white collar 'most to the ends of my shoulders. It's what some swell school kids over there wear, and the first suit ever I had on that some other kid hadn't 'most worn it out before me. A cane and a young stove-pipe hat goes with it.

"D'y' mean any boys my age have to wear one o' those tall boys?" I ast the man, and he says, why surely, and I ast why, and he don't know 'less it's because they always have.

But Bill knows. "They have to train their heads to 'em young, so's bimeby when they grow up and become important people an' have to attend great functions like wheelin' baby carriages or promenadin' Sunday mornin's in the park—

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why they'll be able to wear 'em without a nexpression of pain."

"But I yain't goin' to be important when I grow up," I says, and pass up the tall boy and pick out a cap which I can sit on when I wanta, and that won't be bouncing off my head if a cop or anybody chases me. Besides, some day I'll have to be goin' back to the gang.

We go to the hotel then where I meet Lefty Hall and Bill pays the bill and slips what they call a 'arf crown to a guy I thought was a nother admiral or a gen'ral, but he's the head porter, who he says "Kew!" to the 'arf crown and goes out and flags what they call a keb for us.

"Now," says Bill, "it's Ho for the London lights for you 'n' me 'n' Lefty, Hiker—if somebody don't bust our heads open before we get there," and motions to the keb driver and away we go like swell guys to the railroad station. And we're having supper there when all at once the waiters begin to snap out the lights.

"Air raid comin'," says Lefty.

"I s'pose you been through a few air raids?" asks Bill.

"I was one time in Liverpool," says Lefty, "when a coupla Zeps came sailin' over the old burg and blew the end of one of the big stone docks and the ship I was in 'most into the middle o' the Mersey River."

Hiker Joy

"Kill a lotta people don't they?" ast Bill.

"Lots o' wimmin' 'n' children, the papers said."

"What's the matter with the men—don't they take a chance?" says Bill.

With the lights going out I'm wondering will we have any check to pay. "Don't worry," says Lefty. "The lights over the cashier's desk you'll notice ain't put out, and no gettin' outa this room without passin' the cashier's desk." Which was right.

It's dark in the station when we go out to find the cloak room where we'd checked our grips. Everybody Bill asts don't know or don't answer till he touches off a match to light a cigarette; and when he does: "Put out that light!" roars a voice, and a policeman hops onto him from the dark.

"Sure!" says Bill. "And now old top where's the cloak room?" and we chase behind the policeman to the cloak room, where it's a jam of people trying to tell a nold man and a girl inside the window how soon their train is leaving and cawn't they hurry things up a bit please?

Bimeby the girl gets tired and says to come in and pick out your own luggage, and we go in, and the girl flashes a hand light ahead to where there's about five hundred bags and trunks piled up, some of them looking pretty good.

London Lights

"Me 'n' Bill havin' bought swell ones yesterday, we c'n afford to put temptation behind us, an' take ony our own," says Lefty.

We keep on going till we come to a kind of a archway, which we hear somebody say is bomb-proof. So we don't hurry going through there. It's all jammed up with women and children and soldiers and baby carriages, some of 'em having sandwiches 'n' cocoa 'n' beer, and everybody talkin' pretty low—when they talked a tall; except a soldier who has his back against the wall and his kilts stretched out before him. He's singin' the mournfullest tune:

"I knew a tender maid,
I lived for her dear greeting.
I knew her in another land where orange blossoms grow.
And in that other land
While sunny days were fleeting,
I learned to take her to my heart, she learned to love me so.

Cold northern days are here,
Their chill is o'er me creeping.
I feel my old age coming on, my heart is sad and low.
Remembrance brings me to
The verge of childish weeping—
O Life and Love that once were mine! O Love of long ago!"

"There's a funny sketch!" says Lefty; till we got near to him, when Lefty takes it all back. One of the poor guy's legs was gone, and the arm the other side of him!

Hiker Joy

"And his eyes ain't seein' any more than their share," says Lefty.

"A face he's got," says Bill, "of a man who knew something more than fours right or shoulder arms in his day. It's a great and glorious thing though!"

"What is?" asks Lefty.

"War!" says Bill.

"Huh," says Lefty. "I c'n read that in the papers any day."

"But that poor cripple," says Bill, "not bein' able to read the papers any more, he'll never know it."

We slide out the archway and in among a coupla hundred other people, all makin' for their train too. Somebody bowls over Lefty, and we hear him yelling from out of the dark.

"Perils o' sea!" hollers Lefty. "Perils o' the land, I say! Dijjer see her crash into me starb'd quarter? Gallopin' by she went, a tall bony female and she haulin' a 200-pound trunk by the ear!"

We next heard Bill falling over something. "Excuse *me*!" says Bill; and about a minute later, like he's thinking to himself: "If I stay in this country long enough I'll maybe some day be able to fall over a bench where there ain't a soldier ahead of me an' him havin' hold of a girl!"

London Lights

Bimeby we get to where the train from London comes backing in. We kinda half see and half feel our way through a door and into what they call a compartment.

"The trick now," says Lefty while we're feeling around, "is to keep sittin' down till yuh find a place where there's nobody sittin' down ahead of yuh. When yuh do, it's your seat."

We find empty places, and other people come asking through the door is there any spare room, and everybody hollers no there ain't, but they come right in just the same and fall over everybody's feet and bundles and into what they call a corridor where there's already a jam of mostly soldiers, some of 'em lying down and asleep already. Every place I see yet is jammed mostly with soldiers.

It's such a fine moonlight night that everybody is saying of course the Zeps or the Gothas won't miss the chance to come over. Bimeby the train starts, and when it does everybody says: "They cawn't be coming to-night then," meaning they don't let trains run around the country when there's going to be any air raids.

We're moving along and I'm wondering is everybody asleep, when I hear Lefty talkin' to somebody.

"You wasn't frightened thinkin' of any air raid?" says Lefty.

Hiker Joy

"O no!" says the other voice. "Though I cawn't sye I was feelin' 'appy specially."

They go on talking. She's a lydy's myde and a widder, or to tell the hexact truth, 'er 'usband's been reported missin' on the western front for a twelvemonth now, she tells Lefty.

"I'd call that as good as bein' a widder," says Lefty. "What kind was he, your husband?"

"O, 'e wasn't the worst there was, I'll sye that for 'im," she says. "Fond of 'is beer I might sye, but wot man is without 'is faults?"

"You got the right idea of it," says Lefty, "'cause o' course there ain't none of us perfect," and goes on consoling her like, till bimeby she says:

"Hi halways did like Hamericans. Never afride to spend a few shillin's when a lydy becomes acquainted they eyen't."

By then somebody says we're safe from any air raiders that night, and draws the window curtains and lets in the moon, and where it comes into our compartment it shines on a big hat with roses kinda leaning on Lefty's shoulder.

I watch the moonlight for a while and the country sliding by under it, and then I guess I fell asleep. Anyway, I'm wakened up by a bump and somebody saying: "Well, we're here," meaning we're in London.

There's other trains letting out, and from one

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of 'em a lotta soldiers are coming with rifles and brown iron hats and a nextra pair of shoes and a blanket and about a whole kitchen outfit hung onto 'em behind. They look like they're wondering where they are, most of them, when some nifty-lookin' Janes step up in a pretty swell uniform with collars 'n' ties like a man's and steers them off to autos and busses.

"They must be what I been readin' about," says Bill—"what they call the better class o' wimmin' who meet the trains comin' with men from the front on leave and grab 'em off before the wild wimmin' o' London can grab 'em first. Where's Lefty?"

Lefty comes along with the lydy's myde, saying: "I gotta see this young lady to a taxi," and adds in a whisper: "Slip me a little change will yuh, Bill?"

Bill slips it to him and tells him where to meet us later.

Bill flags a taxi and we go to where I see an American flag flying and a guy in a swell uniform with about seven rows of buttons down the front and behind him a flock of kids looking like swell bell-hops in more buttons when he opens the door. I think maybe it's where the King lives and step back on the porch to have another look up; but it's our flag all right.

Hiker Joy

Bill slips the gorgeous guy 'arf a crown and he passes us in like we're important people. But that's about as far as we get for being important people. There's a dill pickle of a guy in a navy officer's yuniformal sitting at a desk who eyes us and that's all when Bill says we're to wait for Lieutenant Nugent.

There's a door leading to another room and in it is two gobs, one of them looking like he's just off a ship with his flat cap in his hand, and the other guy tying up a bundle showing he belongs there and looking at the sea-going gob like he's wondering who let him in. And I'm watching them and the dill pickle when I hear Bill whisper: "What y' thinkin' of?"

"I'm thinkin' I'll never be great 'n' good enough to have a job in this place," I whisper back, and Bill says:

"That's as it should be. Little kings 'n' foxy Prime Ministers 'n' sometimes fat Bishops an' important Captains of Industries set the stage the same way—so you 'n' me 'n' everybody 'll absorb the proper amount o' veneration before we're admitted to the Presence. We are now breathing the air of the Admiralty."

Bimeby the captain of our destroyer comes in, and he's a great scout—a slam-bang, scared-o'-nothing guy out to sea, but here he's like he's

London Lights

afraid to cut loose. He has a report about a wrecking detail and their fine attempt to save an abandoned ship he says to the yofficer at the desk, who looks at him like he's saying to himself: "O dear, I wish people wouldn't bother me so!" and chucks the report on his desk, saying: "I shall file it."

Our captain is looking kinda discouraged when another officer, who's more like a reg'lar guy to look at, comes in and he spots my captain and when he does—"Hulloh-h Jud!" he hollers, and "Hulloh-h, Dee," my captain hollers, and tells Dee about the salvage crew and First Class Seaman White saving Nugent.

And Dee says: "Jud, I haven't been here long, but I've been here long enough to be able to get the true perspective about things. Saving lives and salvaging ships and all that rough sea stuff is all very well in its way, but the important thing in a war is the doings of the staff ashore. Nugent and White and that bunch are all right in their way, but you've got the wrong idea about their value."

"But dam it, Dee, think of the danger they ran!"

"Danger? Say, Jud, did y'ever think of the danger we run here? Did you ever get a splinter in the seat of your pants from revolving too care-

Hiker Joy

lessly in an office chair? Or were y' ever almost run over crossing Leicester Square by a cab in one of these demned London fogs trying to make a music hall? Tough game, I tell you."

Our skipper asks about what he calls the top-side guy—could he see him? And Dee says: "Sorry, old top, but we are having a conference right now with a third assistant secretary. And we are taking lunch to-day with a cabinet member's uncle—or maybe it's his aunt."

"How about to-morrow, Dee?"

"To-morrow, my dear chap, is a most sacred day," says Dee. "To-morrow we are lunching with the Prime Minister, and in the afternoon we are posing with the King for moving pictures, and in the evening we have a most important dinner at Guildhall. Perhaps—let me see—on the afternoon of the day after to-morrow—say——"

"Say Dee," says our skipper, "you know they never let us stay in port that long! On the afternoon of the day after to-morrow my ship will be to sea again."

"We know it," says Dee, "which is why we will receive you then."

"Oh—tell 'em all to go to hell, will you?" says my skipper, so loud that the dill pickle hears him, and he revolves in his chair and looks after my captain going out the door and says:

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"I've a jolly good mind to report what he said."

"Why give yourself trouble, old dear? Come and have lunch with me and forget it," says Dee, and the dill pickle bounces up and Dee lifts up one side of his mouth and drops down one eye at Bill and me going out.

We don't see Nugent a tall, but we get word from him over the phone. "We ought to be able to clean up the last of that gang to-night," he says to Bill, and tell him where to meet him that night and what time.

So we go out and drift along till we see a big soldier in kilts. "Hi there, Scotty, gimme a light will yuh?" says Bill.

"Scotty, me eye!" says the soldier—"I'll bet I came from within ten miles of where you did. How were the Giants makin' out when you left?"

"Oh, the same old cinch—startin' off. Where's a place to get a good drink?" says Bill.

He shows Bill a good place, but tips him off saying: "Whiskey ain't what it used to be before the war. Take my advice, friend, and order a double whiskey with your soda."

Bill does, and drinks it.

"Was I right?" says the soldier.

"You were," says Bill, "and I think I'll have another."

"Another double?"

Hiker Joy

"Double? No; make it a triple," says Bill.

We go from there to a place to eat where Bill orders a pretty good layout of grub for all of us, ony we can have ony so much of whatever we want and no both of some things like fish and meat together.

"Any law," says Bill to the soldier, "from us goin' to another restaurant and havin' another meal on top of this."

"None," says the soldier.

So we go out and have another meal; and getting up from it Bill says: "It's a tough war, friend, but what's to stop a man's solid comfort, if he's got the price?"

"Nothing—if he has the price," says the soldier, and leaves us because he has to go back to barracks, and Bill and me go around having a peek at London and it's certain'y an eyeful, ony about all I could see at first was soldiers. When I got more time for it I see there was other people walkin' the streets, but not at first. I didn't know there was so many soldiers in the world.

"The fighting in France must be over," I says to Bill.

"No," says Bill—"most o' these soldiers yuh see belong to the staffs. The people on the staffs are the yimportant guys in all armies and in all wars. Anybody a tall will do to fight, which

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you c'n see by the prices they pay—five cents to a dollar a day for good fightin' men. But to keep the fightin' men going, to tell 'em who they gotta fight an' when, 'n' where, an' knockin' out letters to tell 'em on the latest-model typewriters—that takes brains."

Bill tells me how I can pick out the staff guys and I take to counting 'em going by, but they keep coming so fast I give it up.

That evening early we're bumping our way through mostly soldiers and a lot more of what Bill calls the wild wimmin' o' London, which no soldier is safe with, says Bill.

"Am I a young man?" says Bill. "No! Am I good lookin'? No. But put me in a uniform," says Bill, "and in two minutes you'd be walkin' alone, Hiker. Even out o' uniform—look at Lefty! Where is he now when he yought to be with us?"

They were grabbing men right and left, the wild wimmen, till bimeby we began to notice there ain't so many of them, nor so many of anybody else, and next thing we notice is policemen tearing along on bicycles with signs on reading: "Air Raid" on their chest, and "Take Cover" on their backs, and blowing little whistles while they're tearing along.

Says Bill: "We'll take a cab to the place where

Hiker Joy

we're to meet Mr. Nugent." But when we try to flag any, they whiz by without even a look at us.

"We'll take a buss," says Bill, but what they call the busses went by like fire engines, ony no passengers in 'em, about forty miles a hour, and Bill lookin' at the size of them says he wonders what'll happen if they bump into something their own tonnage outa some side street.

"No busses?" says Bill. "Very well, we'll take the tube," meaning the subway. But there musta been about two million people beat us to the tube. We tried two stations and both places the mobs of people were bulging out onto the sidewalks outside.

"Well, it's a fine night for a walk," says Bill. But not too many walking, we notice. After maybe a mile we pass about ten people, and eight of them is soldiers with a girl. "Where's the seven million people o' this town gone to?" says Bill.

Overhead there's searchlights shooting long alleys of bright lights across the sky. We stop in what they call a circus, meaning a square, to watch 'em. The searchlights go out, but the banging o' the guns keeps on. We find the hotel then where we're to pick up Lefty and have a bite to eat, but we don't pick up Lefty and we

London Lights

don't get anything to eat because there's no lights in the eating place, which is in the middle of the hotel with all glass over it.

"No 'ealthy place to be in with bombs droppin' about," says a man, and Bill says quite right old top, it ain't.

There's other people there. We bump over 'em in dark places when we try to walk around—on the stairs and other good places that we notice is out of line with the doors and any of the low windows.

We're wandering around looking for the hotel bar, knowing Lefty'll be handy to there if he's around, when we hear more banging of guns, meaning they're firing more guns at the Zeps outside.

"Will our shells reach them or will they be wasted?" ast a voice in the dark.

"Divvle a fear they'll be wasted," says another voice. "If they miss the raiders, they will drop fine and handy to any loose people walkin' the shtreets."

"Serve them right—why don't they stop at home?" says a woman's voice. And "quite right!" and "'ear! 'ear!" says a coupla men's voices.

In the middle of the banging comes a long boom! —meaning it's a bomb.

Hiker Joy

"But only a little one," says a voice, and it's Lefty's voice; so we poke around to find him.

There's more what they call barrage guns, a hundred of 'em maybe, and then boom! boom!

"Little ones," says Lefty's voice again, talking like a nexpert on them. "All little ones—none of 'em over sixty pounds."

"Only sixty pounds! What grand luck we are in!" says a voice we'd heard before. "Sure an' I don't suppose one that size wouldn't any more than blow this building across the shstreet."

He's about finished when there's a great crasho! It's a coupla hatfuls of shrapnel from a barrage gun coming through the glass what they call the canopy over the sidewalk in front of the doorway.

There's more banging of guns and a booming of bombs, about one bomb to maybe five hundred guns; and then it goes quiet, and in the quiet somebody says:

"Do you think they will return?"

And somebody else says, kinda discouraged like: "They are reputed to be fond of railway stations and this hotel is quite handy to one, you know," and she'd hardly got that out when wha-a-ng! and wha-a-ng! again comes right alongside us, meaning a coupla hatfuls of shrapnel 're falling onto the sidewalk out in front. I

London Lights

go down to find a coupla pieces for sooveneers, and when I come back I hear a girl's voice saying:

"Where I live we have never had an air raid. Do you think I can honestly write home now and say that I have been through one?" And a woman's voice, sounding like she's been thinking it over says slowly: "Yes, my dear, I think you can."

And next I bump into Lefty's voice again, and the voice of the lydy's myde answering him.

"No man at no age is safe from 'em—let him be and we'll go on," says Bill when I get back and tell him about Lefty; and from the porter, who's standing down near the door but not in line with it, we get directions how to go to the address Mr. Nugent's given Bill.

We find Mr. Nugent with half a dozen other men all set to go wherever it is we're going, and we start out in two big autos and go through the streets about forty miles a hour. There's policemen on bicycles telling the people the air raid is over before we start; but somebody must 've tipped them off wrong, because we ain't hardly started when the barrage guns begin to bust out all over again.

"Wouldn't you think they'd be satisfied with one trip a night?" says Bill, when bo-o-om! goes a bomb somewheres a good ways off; and then

Hiker Joy

Boom!—one not so far off, and shrapnel rattling onto the street alongside our auto.

That was all right; everybody could make a funny crack about the things that don't hit us; but a minute later there's a crack like the yearth busting open and our auto is bouncing around like a boat at sea, and the next thing we go into a hole in the middle of the street that's just big enough to hold us when down we bounce into it.

We get out. The hole is in front of a hotel, and the cement stairs outside the hotel is all shook up and the revolving door of the hotel is—nobody knows where it's gone to; and all the windows in the hotel and in the houses on both sides of the street is smashed for a block—clean to the roof.

The street is covered with broken glass and they're carrying dead people away while we're trying to get our car out of the hole. But we have to give up trying 'less we wanta stay there all night; so we leave it and hike—it's ony about a mile or so, Mr. Nugent says.

All the time we're hiking the barrage guns and the bombs are going. We hurry along and bimeby Mr. Nugent stops us in a place where there's a park like taking up most of the space—with a niron fence and flower bushes all around. Mr. Nugent has the right house picked out 'n' every-

London Lights

thing, with two men at the back door and two men at the front door, and me 'n' Bill like a coupla skirmishers with Bill hauling out a nautomatic and saying:

"All I want, Hiker, is a crack at a coupla them when they come running out!"

But they don't come out. Nobody comes out. Everything is set for a big inning when— It was the real explosion of the night come. When I come to I'm under a pile of whatever it is is over me, and I begin to dig myself out saying: "It's all over. All London is blown up and I'm the only one left alive. Poor Bill and all the rest of the gang, they're gone!"

I take a look around when I get out. And there's Bill.

"You little rabbit, you! We thought we'd lost you at last," he says when he sees me.

"Where's the others?" I ast.

"In the house," he says—"what's left of the house, seeing if they can find anybody."

But they don't find anybody—not alive.

"We could all 've stayed at home," says Mr. Nugent when he comes out, "and it would 've happened just the same. However," cheering up a little, "they're all cleaned up."

"And is that all there is to it—to the green belt 'n' the Brooklyn gang o' bombers?" I says.

Hiker Joy

"That's all," says Mr. Nugent, and says more about how it's too bad Bill and me ain't wearing a yuniformal—if we was ony in yuniformal we'd be getting a nofficial batting average he says.

"It's all right," says Bill. "Hiker's too young to know better, and's for me—I killed a coupla men and got away with it. Not even a cop steps up to say I'm wanted. I got a few enemies back in New York, an' I can see now all I gotta do is hook 'em up on the wrong side of the war and then go kill 'em off. A great game, war."

There's nothing more to do in London 'less it's when Lefty comes around to see Bill next morning. He's looking discouraged.

"She was no widder a tall," says Lefty. "Her husband come back last night—after the raid. And he's the kind of a guy to look at that I don't believe ever got anywhere near any firin' line. Hid away in London all the time I'll bet he was. Anyway he's back and I'm going on."

"O' course you're busted?" says Bill.

"O' course, Bill, you know I wouldn't be shy of entertainin' a lady while I had the price," says Lefty.

"It was booze got me," says Bill. "And no mystery, Lefty, I guess why at our age you're a North Atlantic cattleman and I'm a bum," but

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he don't forget to slip Lefty one of his hundred dollar bills the same time.

"Bill," says Lefty, "I'd 'a' listened to more good advice in my time if ony they showed the same as you that they yain't sore on me while they're givin' it. Out o' this I'm goin' to buy myself a pretty swell lookin' cornet I see in a pawn shop winder to-day. And then it's on to God's country and stay there."

That night Bill 'n' me meet Mr. Rush on the little island at the naval base where Mr. Nugent and his wife live. It's a great place where I had a swim, which felt pretty good because it was the first swim I'd had in a long time that I didn't have to take.

There's a little beach there and each end the beach is a bunch of rocks with the ocean sorta breathing in on the sand between. Bill 'n' me we sit there and count the breaths like. Out to sea there's a light-ship winking. There's a coupla mine sweepers too. Sometimes we can hear their crews talking.

The moon comes; which makes me think how 'most everything happened me since leaving New York happened with the moon somewheres around. It comes poking up over the roofs of the town—kinda yellow and a little lopsided 'cause it's getting old, Bill says.

Hiker Joy

Mr. Rush is gone to bed, but Mr. Nugent and his wife 're sitting on their pile of rocks. Bimeby they get up and go into their cottage. Bill turns and has a peek after them. "To-morrow he goes to sea," says Bill, "and to-morrow night this time she'll be looking lonely and weeping out on that sea where is all she loves an' all she dreads. To-morrow he goes to sea, not knowin' will he ever come back. But this night is theirs."

"What d' y' think of it all, Hiker?" says Bill bimeby.

"One time I was gettin' kinda tired o' bein' wrecked, but here now with all the swell eats 'n' sleeps comin' to us—pretty soft!" I says.

"Feet of a boy—do they ever grow weary?" says Bill. "I look at you, Hiker, an' the weight of my age—and it may be my sins—lies heavy on me," and goes to reciting some poetry which he says he read one time in the Yastor Libry, but which I think he doped out himself. Bimeby he hauls out his pipe and sits there and smokes and smokes, and when he gets to smoking a long time without acting like he wants to talk, I know its time for me to leave. And so I go into the swell hotel and to bed.

And from my bed I can see him stuck up on the top rock under the moon, watching it climb



The ocean just sort o' breathing in on the sand—Bill 'n' me sit here and count the breaths like.

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and the shine of it on the water and the winking little lights out to sea, I s'pose.

I dunno how long he stayed; but a lot longer than I stayed awake, I know, me lying there and the surf rolling in and singing me to sleep, and making me feel pretty good. If ony the gang was somewheres around to be having a share of it. But a fuhla can't have it all soft.

Finny

WHEN Bill hands back what I wrote so far I notice he's put in more spelling an' what they call grammar towards the yend than in the beginning and I ast him why, and he says:

"In the beginnin' I had to give what I s'pose I gotta call your style a chance. But there's such a thing as too much style, so I eased yours off a little as we went on."

"What's that style stuff?" I says.

"The litry umpires 've written many books on what style is, but no two of 'em 're yet agreed on what it is," says Bill. "But if yuh force me I'd say a nauthor's style is his way of puttin' his story over—an' if he's got any way a tall of his own it's maybe better for him to use that way than copy somebody else's that don't come nachral to him. You write like you talk an' sometimes your talk is fierce, but it's your own way an' don't let me or anybody else kid yout of it. It'll keep yout of a lotta respectable circulatin' an' college libraries, meanin' there'll be a lotta kids who won't be clubbed into readin' yuh whether they want to or not, which is no great harm to you, meanin' they maybe won't be heavin' bricks at

Finny

yuh when they grow up an' realize what was done to 'em when they were young 'n' defenseless."

"Then it's all right for me to write more?"

"Oh Lord!" says Bill. "Take men puttin' up a buildin' or tearin' it down or hangin' paper or shovelin' coal, an' most any of 'em know when they're done. But a nauthor or a norator! You take orators talkin' politics an' religion, an' German atrocities an' the yearth is flat or it ain't flat, an' most any of 'em know how to keep goin', but about one in fifty when to stop. Authors the same. You started out to tell about a gang o' German bombers an' a green belt, an' yuh've killed off all the bombers an' slipped the belt on to the right people, ain't yuh? An' the nearest fuhla an' girl to a hero an' herrin'—well, they're married ain't they? All right! Then what more is there to say?"

"But a lotta other intrestin' things happened."

"There's intrestin' things happenin' 'most anywheres 'most anytime, but what they gotta do with the story is what a nauthor's got to look out for. Those French sailors who drifted into the naval base the yother day to repair their ship have a great word for when a thing is done—ever hear it?"

"Oh, I heard it. How d' y' spell it?"

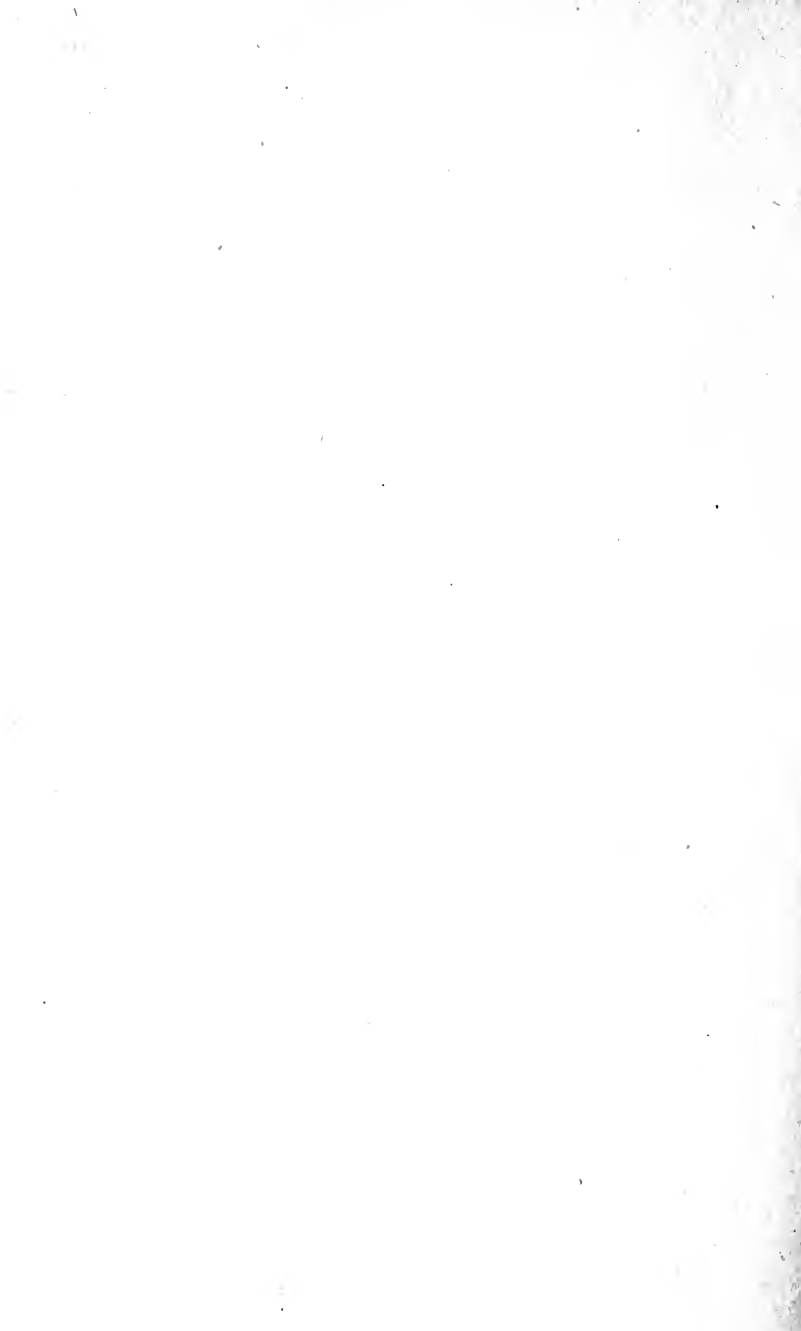
Hiker Joy

“It’s tough enough,” says Bill, “to be listenin’ to French words without havin’ to spell ’em. Spell it to suit yourself.”

Bill being my what he calls litry adviser I gotta do as he says, so here goes:

FINNY









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